



# LEARNING MATERIALS FOR KOREAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

A Comparative Review of Four Beginner Level  
Textbooks

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan ja vertaillaan neljää alkeistason korean kielen oppikirjaa. Tavoitteena on selvittää, kuinka paljon ja minkälaisia harjoituksia ne tarjoavat kielitaidon eri osa-alueiden opetteluun, ja kuinka ne ottavat huomioon oppijoiden yksilölliset erot. Lisäksi pyritään löytämään joitakin erityispiirteitä, joita suomenkielisessä korean oppikirjassa tarvitaan.  Valitut oppikirjat ovat suomalaisissa yliopistoissa käytetyt Ganada Korean 1, Sogang Korean 1A, Seouldae hangukeo 1A ja Fun! Fun! Korean 1. Arviointikriteerit muodostetaan kielen oppimisen teorioiden pohjalta. Kielitaidon todetaan olevan yhdistelmä kielioppia, sanastoa, kuullun ymmärtämistä, luetun ymmärtämistä, puhumista ja kirjoittamista, sekä keskustelutaitoja ja kulttuurin tuntemusta. Kieliopin, sanaston ja harjoitusten määrä lasketaan, ja sisältöä tarkastellaan tulosten valossa oppijoiden yksilölliset erot huomioon ottaen. Lopuksi oppikirjojen tuloksia vertaillaan keskenään.  Tutkimuksessa selviää, että kaikki kirjat esittävät uuden tiedon teemoittain ja sisältävät sekä kaavamaisia että luovia tehtäviä. Kaavamaiset harjoitukset ovat enemmistössä erityisesti Ganadassa, mutta kommunikatiivisia tehtäviä on vain vähän kaikissa kirjoissa. Eniten kielioppia ja sanastoa on Ganadassa ja Fun Koreanissa. Kuullun ymmärtämistehtäviä on sekä määrällisesti että suhteellisesti eniten Ganadassa. Sama pätee luetun ymmärtämistehtäviin. Kaikki kirjat tarjoavat ääntämisharjoituksia. Puhetehtäviä korostavat eniten Fun Korean ja Sogang. Luovia kirjoitusharjoituksia on hyvin vähän kaikissa kirjoissa. Kaikki paitsi Sogang sisältävät erillisiä tietoiskuja kulttuurista. Sogang on myös ainoa, joka ei sisällä englanninkielisiä käännöksiä. Eniten opetusaikaa on suunniteltu Fun Koreanin käyttäjille. Kirjat eivät tarjoa paljoa palautetta tai mahdollisuuksia itseopiskeluun. Eri oppimistyyplejä ajatellen Sogang on vähiten joustava. Kirjojen sisältö ylipäättään on aikuisopiskelijoita motivoivaa ja kiinnostavaa, vaikkakin ajoittain vaikeaa toteuttaa.  Tuloksista voidaan päätellä, että Ganada sopii parhaiten käytettäväksi Koreassa, sillä se harjoittaa enemmän reseptiivisiä taitoja. Suomen kontekstissa se toimii tutkituista oppikirjoista parhaiten itseopiskelussa. Fun Korean sopii suhteellisen hyvin suomalaisopiskelijoille sen sisällön määrän ja laadun, sekä siihen käytettävän ajan puolesta. Myös Sogangin puhetaitojen painotus vastaa suomalaisopiskelijoiden tarpeita, mutta se vaatii koreaa äidinkielenään puhuvan, tai vastaavat tiedot ja resurssit omaavan opettajan, sillä se ei sisällä englanninkielisiä käännöksiä eikä selityksiä kielioppisäännöille. Seouldae sopii parhaiten analyttisille opiskelijoille, jotka kaipaavat syvempää tietoa korean kielen rakenteista. Kaikkien kirjojen keskeisimmät haittapuolet ovat niiden hinta ja englanti välikielenä. Molemmat ovat ratkaistavissa suomenkielisellä korean oppikirjalla. Sen tulisi sisältää kielioppisäännöt suomeksi, tarjota sanastolle suomenkieliset käännökset, painottaa kommunikatiivisia taitoja ja pyrkiä tekemään oppimisesta hauskaa. Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords vieraan kielen oppikirja, korean kieli, aikuisoppija, kielitaidon osa-alueet, yksilölliset erot kielen oppimisessa Säilytyspaikka – Förvaringställe – Where deposited Keskustakampuksen kirjasto Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information		

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# 1 Introduction

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*“Learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things, but learning another way to think about things.”*

*-Flora Lewis*

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Language learning remains in constant flux as we move through life – from a small baby learning her mother tongue to elementary schoolers getting familiar to new sounds and words in a classroom, or to adults moving abroad with an urgent need to become acquainted with the target language as quickly as possible. Language, in its essence, is a form of communication that enables us to voice and hear each other’s wants and needs. Humans are social creatures, and language is a key element to forming social groups. It can separate us from society if we do not know the surrounding language(s), or it can bring us together when we are able to communicate with the people around us and find similarities and common interests. Learning a new language is learning to communicate in a new way, with people from other cultures, and gaining insight and perspective that cannot be achieved otherwise. In such cases it is beneficial to have access to language courses, teachers and study materials to make learning easier. For the material to be optimal, research is needed, whether that be on how to create materials for quick learning, what kind of content produces the best results, or other topics.

However, learning material research is a field with a short history and hardly any systematic execution. Studies started as textbook reviews 30–40 years ago with a focus on elementary school textbooks, and they have mostly been carried out with qualitative methods. In Finland, most of the recent papers are Master’s theses, and the most renowned institutions to produce research on foreign language materials are the University of Helsinki and the University of Jyväskylä. One main reason for the lack of systematic research is that there has not been a common base for criticism. As

learning, teaching and study materials constantly change with the times, all-encompassing and lasting evaluation criteria are impossible to form. No criteria can be entirely objective. (Elomaa 2009, Hiidenmaa 2014.)

Learning material has traditionally been considered to be textbooks, workbooks, grammars and other printed materials, therefore those have been the subjects of most studies. Recently, however, a growing number of research has been done on electronic materials (Hiidenmaa 2014). It is advantageous over traditional textbooks in that it can be updated with current topics, trends, and methods, and there are no limitations of content space. Disadvantages include the need for equipment, which can create inequality among students, and possibly the need to move to a multimedia classroom, which takes away from the valuable face to face instruction time (Elomaa 2009).

Textbooks on the other hand still hold a large market. Both teachers and students value them as they feel more permanent compared to hand-outs or electronic materials. They can also be used as a frame that the teacher can lean on and deviate from with other materials. Many prefer textbooks simply because they are accustomed to using them. (Elomaa 2009.) However, a textbook can never be the final version. With new generations of language speakers and new methods of teaching and learning being discovered and tested, the content outdates fast. As can be seen, both media have their advantages and disadvantages, so the choice to use either one or a mixture of both is in the hands of education officials and teachers.

If learning material has been researched very little, studies on Korean language textbooks are next to none, specifically in Finland. Korean taught in Finland is still a marginal subject, although the interest is steadily rising. The number of Korean courses around Finland is increasing, and all the teachers have their own reasons to choose one textbook series over another. Access to electronic sources is still difficult to come by, and textbooks still remain as the easier option. As there are no Korean textbooks in Finnish or Swedish, the only choices are books in English. Many

universities and institutions in South Korea have published their own textbook series for international students, often in English, Chinese and Japanese versions. The Korean language courses taught in Finland use these books for material.

In this study, keeping with the little tradition there is in foreign language textbook research, I review four elementary level Korean textbooks used as course books by the main providers of Korean language courses: the Helsinki Summer University, the University of Turku and the University of Helsinki. As there are no set rules or definitive criteria for the qualitative analysis of textbooks, I have created my own, focusing on the current ideas of language learning and the average Finnish adult learner. I attempt to answer the following questions:

- 1) How much and what kind of practice do the books provide concerning language skills? I will specifically look at the amount of vocabulary, grammar, and exercises, as well as evaluate the quality of the content.
- 2) How do the books accommodate the personal differences of learners? The personal differences related to language learning that I will focus on are language background and age-related factors, with some attention to motivation and general appeal.

The structure of this paper is as follows: Chapter two discusses the theories and ideas that this research is based on. In chapter three, I will introduce the textbooks and present the evaluation criteria along with some of the problems I encountered while conducting this research. Chapter four presents and discusses the results in detail. Finally, the conclusions are drawn in chapter five with some suggestions for a Korean textbook made specifically for Finnish students and some ideas for further research.

## 2 Language learning theories

Language is defined as a tool for communicating and sharing information and ideas between people. It is a communication system that enables us to literally and verbally present thoughts and ideas (Pietilä and Lintunen 2014:20). Mother tongue is the first language a child learns in early childhood. If neither the parents nor the new-born have hearing, speaking, or seeing disabilities, babies first learn to comprehend speech, then form speech themselves. Later, they learn to read, and finally write. All these skills continue to develop throughout their lives, but the early stages of language learning are the same.

The language people learn after their mother tongue is called the second language, or L2 (after which, L3, L4 et cetera). However, in research, second language acquisition and foreign language learning are two different things. According to the acquisition-learning hypothesis, second language acquisition is acquiring a language unconsciously, with focus on communicating to understand the content rather than being grammatically correct, and not necessarily receiving corrections for mistakes or explicit teaching of the rules of the language. Foreign language learning on the other hand, is learning a language consciously by learning the rules. Immersion in the target language or a native teacher are not necessary. (Pietilä and Lintunen 2014: 12-13.) For people speaking Finnish as their mother tongue in Finland, almost all language learning is the latter. Immersion in Swedish or Sápmi, for example, is possible, but mainly for children in language immersion -programs ('kielikylpy') or bilingual families. Others have to rely on explicit teaching in language courses and get by with much less input<sup>1</sup>.

Language teaching methods can be divided into two categories: focus on structure and focus on function and interaction (Järvinen 2014b). Previously, language learning was considered learning the rules and

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<sup>1</sup> The surrounding language material or the exposure to language in use.

structure of the target language. Later the focus shifted to communicative competence, and new psychological and linguistic theories have been contributed to the research until now. (Elomaa 2009, Hiidenmaa 2014.) The current understanding of language learning is that it is a process where learners use the target language input, knowledge of previously learned languages and general learning strategies to develop their skills (Pietilä & Lintunen 2014: 20).

The components of the learning process are factors related to the individual, factors related to the learning environment, and factors related to interaction. Motivation to learn, positive emotions towards the target language, and sufficiently challenging content are advantageous traits for language learners. (Lindblom-Ylänne, Hailikari and Postareff 2014.) Psycholinguistic language learning theories suggest that the learning environment must be able to provide a large amount of authentic, meaningful, and understandable input, as well as be a positive, supportive, and understanding setting that tolerates and approves mistakes. According to the sociocultural language learning theory, learning foreign language skills and identity happens in communities like a classroom. (Järvinen 2014a: 74, 85.)

Foreign language skills consist of knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, and receptive (listening, reading) and productive (speaking, writing) skills. Learning is affected by individual differences, for example motivation, personality, and age. Learners' own estimates of their skills are not objective and thus, often inaccurate. Evaluation of learners' skills also varies by teacher unless there are common guidelines. Such guidelines or language level tests have been created; for example, CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) produced for describing foreign language abilities, or the language proficiency level of individual learners, and TOPIK (Test of Proficiency In Korean) made specifically for Korean language learners.



### Common Reference Levels: global scale

C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of proficient meaning even in more complex situations.
C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and Independent disadvantages of various options.
B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Table 1. CEFR levels (<http://www.helsinki.fi/kksc/english/reflevels.html>) Sep 20, 2017.

Table 1 shows the global scale of the common reference levels of CEFR defined by the Council of Europe. The CEFR is a commonly accepted framework for language level proficiency. It leans on communicative competence and constructivist learning theory, or learner as an active and reflective developer of information and skill. The framework has been criticized for being fragmented, difficult to understand, and simplistic in that all language learning does not start at level A1 and end in C2, as every

learner is different. However, it is still a useful tool to describe and compare language skill levels of individual learners nationally, continentally, or even globally. Moreover, such models of language skills and communicative competence are needed, because they affect the goals and methods of language teaching, curriculum, roles of learners and teachers, and how materials are made and used. (Veivo 2014: 34, 42–43.)

#### [Beginner level]

**1st Grade** Use of basic commands of Korean for survival, such as greeting, purchasing, ordering, etc. Expressing and understanding oneself in simple everyday conversation by making simple sentences from 800 basic words.

**2nd Grade** Discussion of familiar topics employing a vocabulary of about 1,500~2,000 words. Distinguishing correctly between formal and informal situations.

#### [Intermediate level]

**3rd Grade** Carrying out transactions with people in public spaces and maintaining social relationships. Understanding the correct usage of words and speech. Command of fundamental characteristics of Korean.

**4th Grade** Comprehension of news articles, general social issues and abstract topics with accuracy and fluency. Comprehension of Korean social and cultural contents relying on essential idioms and understanding of representative aspects of Korean culture.

#### [Advanced Level]

**5th Grade** High fluency in using the Korean language in professional research or work. Understanding and discussing less unfamiliar topics in politics, economics and other fields. Usage of appropriate expressions, distinguishing formal and informal, written and spoken, by context.

**6th Grade** Absolutely fluent in the Korean language for professional research or work, Capacity to understand and express oneself without problem, although without the full fluency of a native speaker.

Table 2. TOPIK levels (<https://www.topikguide.com/topik-overview/>) Sep 20, 2017.

Table 2 describes the general proficiency guidelines for TOPIK levels. The division is similar to the CEFR, but does not seem to reach as high a proficiency. This can be an illusion created by the difference between general and Korean-specific descriptions of language proficiency, or simply because the creator is different. The TOPIK level descriptions can be criticized as being vague. For example, how does one define “simple

everyday conversations”, which words are included in the 800 of the first grade or the 2000 of the second grade, what are the “fundamental characteristics of Korean” et cetera? Furthermore, TOPIK only measures proficiency in listening, reading, and writing. The latter is added to the exam from the intermediate level upwards. Speaking skills, especially fluency, are difficult to measure by large scale testing. The definitions leave room for different interpretations, and are not as detailed as the CEFR’s scale. Although the descriptions of the levels are ambiguous, the benefits of having such a system are similar to that of the CEFR. They can be used as a guide to create teaching methods and materials, even curricula.

I have discussed language in general: the mother tongue, second language, and other foreign languages, as well as the theory of language learning and ways to measure the proficiency. Next, I will consider the pieces that constitute language proficiency in more detail. Later I will take a closer look at the individual differences that affect learning.

## 2.1 Particles of proficiency

Language proficiency consists of a variety of knowledge and skills. Knowledge of the structure of the target language and a mental lexicon are the most basic pieces. Language skills can be roughly divided into two categories: receptive and productive. Receptive skills include listening and reading, and productive skills involve speaking and writing. A combination of these skills along with cultural and social knowledge together constitute different parts of what are considered pragmalinguistic skills, or interactive verbal skills. Personal affective goals, like attitude and interculturality, also play a part in language proficiency. (Elomaa 2009: 50.) Language learning is a process, and as such, many of these aspects do not majorly come to play in the beginner level. Particularly conversational skills and writing skills, as they develop on higher proficiency levels, are not as prominent in the beginner level learning material. Be that as it may, the basis of those skills should be laid as early as possible, even if it is in small amounts.

In linguistic terms, grammar includes morphology and syntax. It is the systematic description of the structure of a language. The most common type of grammar for foreign language learning is the pedagogical grammar, which is based on a descriptive grammar, but is normative in nature. It usually includes standard language and colloquial expressions, and presents both new and essential language phenomena for the learner to understand and produce the target language. (Sundman 2014: 115, 116.)

Learning grammar is important, because it enables the learner to produce more accurate language and make less mistakes, and thus be more likely to be understood and successful in their communication. Explicit teaching of grammar produces better results than implicit learning, specifically in an environment where contact with the target language is limited, as is the case of learning Korean in Finland. However, both types are needed, as the learners' abilities to absorb information are different. Conscious knowledge of the structure of a language alone is not enough, it needs to be automatized for fluent and easy communication. Automatization requires large amounts of input and practice, or in other words, continuous examples of use and exercises in the textbook or other study material. (Sundman 2014: 117–122.)

The content, the amount, and the order of grammar taught is mostly dictated by tradition. Everything cannot be taught, and it is difficult to determine which parts are the most important. National exams, or other important exams like TOPIK, also guide the teaching of grammar. However, explicit teaching only influences the speed and accuracy with which the grammar is learned – not the order. It is suggested, that learning grammar follows a universal evolution: everyone learns it in the same order (Sundman 2014: 135–136). In the beginner level, learning grammar inductively, or forming a rule from multiple examples, is the most efficient. However, adults or more advanced learners benefit more from deductive learning, where the rule is given first and applied to examples. (Ibid: 125, Järvinen 2014b: 98.) Hence, for adult beginners, either method will work. Rather than age or the level of proficiency, the deciding factor is the way individual students learn. This

means that both methods can be used in the elementary level learning material for adults.

Vocabulary consists of words, expressions and prefabricated word sequences, which are especially useful at the beginner level. They act as a sort of shortcut to communicative competence; learning them makes fluent and mostly mistake-free communication possible even in the early stages (Sundman 2014: 133). It is important to learn not only individual words, but also word compounds, like collocations, idioms, and established expressions such as greetings (Niitemaa 2014: 141, Vuorinen 2014).

Growing the vocabulary is most important in the beginning of learning a new language; later, the density of the lexical network becomes more important. The mental lexicon is the learner's unique vocabulary of the words they have learned. The words form a net that expands, subtracts, and organizes itself again as it changes. Words are arranged associatively and connect to multiple nodes. Multiple connections are needed for words to be easily recalled, which requires active use of those words, as unused or rarely used words are easily forgotten. (Meara 2009, Niitemaa 2014.) Connectionism suggests that learning is like a stimulus moving in a net, where all the surrounding synapses can learn from the target language input and activate other synapses around them (Järvinen 2014a: 76.) Similarly, learning a word activates other words related to it, and after some repetition it is stored in the memory with those words.

We have established what grammar and vocabulary are and why they are important in learning a foreign language. How they should be taught, and some other aspects were also touched upon. Now, what does the learning material need to consider in terms of receptive and productive language skills? Most importantly, learning a foreign language requires the learner to hear the target language. The parts of the surrounding language material that the learner can make use of, also known as intake<sup>2</sup>, is the number one decisive factor in learning the target language. One must be able to process

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<sup>2</sup> The parts of input the learner can make use of.

the input to recognize different, and possibly new, phonemes, words, structures, and later accents and slang. Coming to contact with different varieties of speech is key. Listening also improves pronunciation. (Lintunen 2014, Pietilä 2014, Pietilä & Lintunen 2014.)

A rather common occurrence in a foreign language classroom is a listening exercise, where students listen to a tape and read it in text form at the same time. Often the content is first listened to without the text. This is thought to improve listening skills. However, listening without a transcript as well as listening and reading at the same time are both arduous jobs for the brain and may in fact inhibit learning. Multiple forms of input create a large cognitive load that hinders the learning process. According to a study by Moussa-Inaty et al (2012), a simpler and more effective way to improve listening skills is reading only. Whether out loud or silently, reading activates the parts of the brain to improve listening and speaking skills without creating as heavy a cognitive load as multiple input methods. In their study, the reading only -method produced the best results in a listening comprehension test compared to listening only or listening and reading at the same time. (Moussa-Inaty, Ayres & Sweller 2012.)

However, this method is effective only when the learner has sufficient knowledge of the target language pronunciation. In the beginning stages it is still more useful to learn by listening in order to avoid pronunciation mistakes and get accustomed to the new language. Even after the beginner level, there is still a difference in learning the content of a text and understanding the language of a text. To learn the content, a dual practice of reading and listening is more efficient, while reading only is the better way to learn the language. (Moussa-Inaty, Ayres & Sweller 2012.)

While hearing the target language is crucial to learning, older learners also benefit from written sources. Vocabulary also plays an important role: the range of the learner's mental lexicon accurately predicts the results of their reading comprehension. Similarly, extensive reading with comprehension exercises is an effective way to learn vocabulary in an environment with

minimal contact to the target language outside the classroom. (Pietilä & Lintunen 2014, Niitemaa 2014.)

Courage is a key element in developing pragmalinguistic skills. Variation and repetition are important in developing the courage to speak without the fear of mistakes. A willingness to take risks in communication results in more input and practice, thus resulting in better language skills. (Pietilä 2014.) This is particularly important as Finnish students tend to fear mistakes to the extent that it hinders their learning. In a case study at the University of Helsinki, students learning Korean evaluated their skills to be quite low regardless of their course level. Their need for accurate and fluent communication, the small amount of contact with Korean, and the fear of making mistakes seemed to be the main reasons for the low evaluations. (Marjala 2013.)

Another key element is sufficient practice in different situations and with different people. Language users contemplate the form and meaning of a language by producing the language verbally and interacting with each other. Being in constant flux, a language is always the sum of its users. Social activities like playing games or working in pairs are good ways to learn and revise. It is equally important to pronounce fluently as it is accurately, which adult learners can achieve by explicit teaching of pronunciation and large amounts of verbal training. (Järvinen 2014a, Lintunen 2014, Niitemaa 2014.)

Language is a part of culture – it is beneficial to know the language to understand the culture, and vice versa. Understanding a message in a foreign language requires familiarity with the corresponding culture; understanding a culture requires knowledge of the language, and the ideas and values behind it. Therefore, including cultural elements to learning materials is important. Textbooks often present a simplistic view of the target culture by giving too little or poor-quality information. Language should be taught in its cultural context, and learners should be presented with authentic encounters with the target culture by, for example, using the

Internet, music, TV-shows, texts and pictures in teaching. (Pyykkö 2014.) Furthermore, with the time and space constraints of foreign language teaching, culture should be included in the learning material implicitly; the material and teaching should convey the way the target language construes the world to elicit the learners' interest. It is more important to be conscious of the similarities and differences between two languages and cultures, than to learn titbits of the target culture. (Elomaa 2009: 109, 116.)

Above I have presented some background theory for how different foreign language skills are learned. The key points include large amounts of both written and verbal input, careful use of multiple input methods, courage to produce language, a lot of practice, social interaction, and familiarization of the target culture. Next, I will introduce theoretical background for the needs of adult language learners.

## 2.2 Adult language learners

There has been much debate about adults' ability to learn languages. Some aspects of research include, for example, critical period theory, length of exposure, motivation, and previous knowledge of languages and learning methods. While younger learners have their own advantages in second language learning, adults seem to be able to excel as well in the right conditions.

Research is inconclusive about the critical period theory in foreign language acquisition. It seems that adults learn more quickly than younger learners, but children develop their language skills further while adults more likely experience fossilisation at some point. In his literary review of research on age and acquisition of foreign languages, Singleton (2003) argues that the critical period theory seems to be outdated. The cause of adult learners' poorer language abilities is more likely the general brain maturational level rather than a specific critical period with a sharp decline of acquisition ability. Studies have shown that adults are capable of retaining a high skill level if their motivation is high, they are enthusiastic to learn, and possibly immersed in the target language and culture. They are, however, more likely



to have an accent than younger learners who often rise up to native-like level in their pronunciation.

Leather (2003) looked at phonological acquisition in more detail and concluded that while it is difficult to find which characteristics and attributes affect language learning, motivation is key in acquiring good pronunciation. Specifically, if learners are motivated to socially engage with the target language, use it with confidence and a positive attitude, they are more likely to reach native-like phonological accuracy. Speaking with an accent can make learners feel like outsiders which can cause lack of motivation and thus fossilisation of language skills, or in other words, plateau in the learning curve. Besides motivation, other factors also play a role in language acquisition. While the learners' first language affects their learning strategies, and phonological and structural understanding, it is not the only aspect. Other factors include learners' full language background – exposure to languages and accents, neurological differences, attitude and socialisation.

Marinova-Todd (2003) suggests, that research should focus on how to create the conditions where learners can excel rather than debating whether or not the critical period exists. Learning a foreign language requires an optimal learning environment, not necessarily an early starting age. Length of exposure and quality of input are key factors in learning, but feedback on pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary is just as important to prevent fossilisation of language. Adult learners often experience a lack of feedback after a certain point, but even if they do not, their motivation dictates whether they correct themselves and become more fluent or not. Because of this, the best results for adult learners are achieved through some explicit teaching of rules and copious amounts of natural situations to practice in. The best time to become proficient in a foreign language is when the learner is the most motivated to continue learning and use the target language outside the classroom.

So, when is the learner the most motivated? Adults could always be assumed to be motivated, as the language courses they take are most often voluntary. That means, that they choose to learn a specific language at a specific time. Their reasons may vary, but learning is not compulsory. Of course, some adults are forced to take certain language courses because of a work transfer or some other situation that is out of their own control. However, motivation is something that can be assumed in most cases, at least to some degree.

A case study by Garcia Mayo (2003) further supports the notion that the length of exposure is more critical than an early start. The study was conducted in an environment where exposure to the target language was minimal outside the classroom. They found that the longer the exposure, the more native-like the students became in spotting their own grammatical errors. Age was not found to be a significant factor. The study concluded that in an environment with limited contact with the target language, effective use of instructional hours by providing the students with ample opportunities to use the language for communication as well as learning the rules is more effective than early exposure in itself. First contact should rather be at a later age when learners have more study strategies and are more motivated and effective in their learning.

Compared to younger learners, adults have the advantage of being able to use their previous knowledge of foreign languages, learning strategies and other general knowledge. Their challenges are different and comparing the groups seems fruitless in many aspects. Rather than concentrating on who learns fastest or furthest or underestimating older learners, teachers, material developers and researchers should focus on giving learners the best tools for them to reach their goals in their target languages. (Marinova-Todd 2003.)

Elomaa (2009: 86–92) suggests, that to support adult language learners, the learning material should concentrate on certain specific traits. First, it should not shy away from using other languages to explain and compare

the target language. Explanations and instructions in the learners' mother tongue, or other previously learned language allow students to work faster. Allowing the occasional use of other languages in conversation relieves some of the pressure of not making mistakes that so many, especially Finnish, students have. Comparing the target language with the mother tongue or even with general knowledge of linguistics helps to develop the learners' deductive skills, and understand the reasoning and construction of the target language.

Second, the material should connect new information to previously learned concepts and provide plenty of chances for rehearsing. Adults strive to widen their information categories, so presenting new words, grammar and other information by groups, forms, or themes is beneficial. Clear titles and chances to self-check the exercises are good for adult learners. A large number of both creative exercises and mechanical drills in different contexts and repeated throughout the material help to automatize new information. The steep learning curve of the beginner level should be taken advantage of by introducing large amounts of grammar and vocabulary. (Elomaa 2009: 95, 99, 104.) The more connections are created between new and old information, the faster the learners can recall words, expressions, and forms.

Third, the material should include authentic language, or in other words, the language produced by a native speaker, as much as possible. Contact with the target language, especially a language like Korean in Finland, is sparse, and the learning material is one of the few encounters the learners are able to get. Therefore, texts, dialogues, and audio tracks with authentic language can be considered more helpful, motivating, believable, and informative than non-authentic input. (Elomaa 2009: 107.)

Vuorinen (2014) also supports the previous points. Language learning materials should enable the students to compare the target language with their previously learned languages, include pictures to support learning, have a mixture of scripted and authentic texts, and divide the chapters to

preparation and main text. Games, pictures and additional texts support different kinds of learners. She also suggests that the material made specifically for the teacher is essential, as it makes their job easier by providing the correct answers to the exercises, exams, electronic material, and other tips. Electronic materials especially relieve the teacher's burden, as they can be all found in one place and enable the use of technology for more interesting class content.

To conclude, children and adults learn differently, but it does not mean that the critical period for foreign language learning exists. Rather than debate about that, the focus should be on how to make all groups learn optimally. For adults, motivation, a positive attitude, social engagement, length of exposure, quality of input, and feedback on their involvement with the target language are key. They are able to use the information they have of life, learning, psychology, culture et cetera to their advantage. Therefore, learning material should consider especially using other languages to instruct and explain, presenting new information thematically, providing a lot of exercises, and using authentic language for adult learners' benefit.

### 2.3 Other individual differences

As mentioned before, individual differences affect language learning. In addition to age discussed earlier, these include linguistic talent, motivation, personality, learning style and learning strategies. Research has proven language learning to be different from other learning. According to Carroll and Sapon [1959 in Pietilä 2014], linguistic talent consists of phonemic coding ability, grammatical sensitivity, inductive language learning ability, and associative memory. Phonemic coding ability and grammatical sensitivity are ways of processing foreign language input; they are abilities to recognize phonemes and grammatical functions. Inductive language learning ability is the capability to make conclusions based on limited language material. Associative memory means to gain, recall and arrange linguistic material in a way that makes learning easier. Learners' abilities in these areas differ; some have high skills in one area and less so or poor in another, some excel in all of them. Relying on analytical skills for learning is

more beneficial in natural environments, immersed in the target language, than relying on memory. Living within the target language culture also speeds the learning process. Research suggests that linguistic talent is innate. However, learners lacking in this ability can compensate with other factors such as motivation and hard work. (Pietilä 2014: 46–49.)

Motivation is thought to consist of the amount of effort the learners puts in their studies, their attitude towards it, and personal investment or willingness to learn. It can be intrinsic or come from the outside, but although autonomy increases inner motivation, the teacher holds an important role. The attribution theory suggests that learners' motivation depends on whether they think their success or failure is due to inner or outer factors. Success due to their own skills and failure because of assignments that prove too difficult result in high motivation, while failure due to lack of ability, and believing success comes from exercises that are too easy result in low motivation. Furthermore, the motivation of students differs from the beginner levels to the more advanced levels. Having goals and a positive attitude are key in the beginning, but in later stages motivation needs to be kept up in order to succeed. Some factors affecting the motivation of students include positive learning experiences, teacher's support, and the functionality and autonomy of the learners' peer group. (Pietilä 2014: 50–54.)

Personality, learning styles and learning strategies have less clear-cut affects. For example, extroverts tend to have better communicational skills, holistic learners tend to understand schemes and generalities while analytic learners better understand details. In the end, flexible learners who fluctuate between styles and strategies according to the situation tend to get the best results. (Pietilä 2014.)

To conclude, learning materials cannot affect the students' individual differences much. They can provide pronunciation guides, teach grammar and present new information in associative themes, so that the learners that are lacking in one or more areas of linguistic talent, can work on them. The material can inspire positive emotions towards the target language and

suggest goals, but it cannot dictate the students' efforts or willingness to learn. The exercises and other content should vary, so that different personalities, learning styles and learning strategies are supported, and different level students do not get discouraged and lose motivation.

### 3 Research data and evaluation criteria

For this study, I have chosen four beginner level Korean textbooks used in Finnish Universities: *New Canada Korean for Foreigners Elementary 1* (가나다 Korean, 2010) previously used in Helsinki Summer University and *Fun! Fun! Korean 1* (재미있는 한국어 1, 2008) currently used in Helsinki Summer University (Sini Räihä, personal communication), *Sogang Korean New Series 1A* (서강 한국어 1A, 2011) used in the University of Turku (Dasom Kim, pers. comm.) and *Seouldae hangukeo 1A* (서울대 한국어 1A, 2015) used in the University of Helsinki (WebOodi 2016). Turku Summer University uses *Ewha Korean 1-1* (Turun kesäyliopisto 2016), which, while it would have been a valuable addition to this research, I was unfortunately not able to acquire. All the books have been published along with workbooks that are not commonly used in the classroom but rather at home for further exercises. Only the textbooks were included in the data.

The criteria for the selection were that the books had to be beginner level and published in South Korea for international students. This way the amount of data could be controlled, and the content of the textbooks would be comparable. To have access to the books and for my research to be useful for Korean language teachers, I chose books that were already in use in Finnish universities (i.e. by Finnish adult learners) and that I could find without excessive travel or expenditure. Although the books all begin from “zero” by introducing the Korean writing system, *Hangul* (한글), their aims of proficiency differ slightly. Despite this variation, the general content can be compared.

Created and published in South Korea, the textbooks are also intended to be used in South Korea by foreigners learning Korean while being immersed in the language and culture. This produces challenges for the use of these textbooks in countries like Finland. First, learning Korean is mediated through another foreign language, English. This can create problems if the students are not proficient enough in English. Translations from Korean to English to Finnish may be inaccurate and misunderstandings can arise. It

can be difficult to understand the instructions and explanations in the textbook, which slows down learning and frustrates the students. Secondly, some exercises are difficult or even impossible to execute, when the students cannot come into contact with Korean outside the classroom. It is then the teachers' responsibility to create chances for contact through teaching. It also requires strong motivation from the students to learn to speak with minimal contact or search for it independently.

### 3.1 The textbook data

In this part, I will introduce each book individually: explain the structure, give some examples of the content, and explain the method used for the categorization of the exercises. The content will be evaluated quantitatively in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and exercise distribution (speaking, writing, listening, and writing exercises). It will also be analysed with qualitative criteria formed from the theories in the previous chapter.

The categorization of the exercises generally follows the textbooks' own as closely as possible. Some exceptions occur within the textbooks, for example, a speaking exercise in a reading section. Such instances are considered individually. All books start with the introduction of the *hangul*, with various exercises to familiarize the learner with Korean letters and phonetics. These parts have been omitted from the data. Main texts and dialogues have also been excluded from the data, as they are not specifically exercises even though they could be treated as reading, listening, or pronunciation practice in the classroom. This ambiguity also makes them difficult to categorize. Cultural sections are there mainly for information and generally do not include activities, therefore they are not included in the data. In the listening sections, listening to the track is counted as one exercise in addition to the comprehension checks. Similarly, reading exercises generally consist of reading a text as well as the follow-up questions. The number of comprehension checks is the number of the main questions; the sub-questions will not be counted individually. All conversation activities and pronunciation exercises are included in the



speaking section, and only tasks that require the student to create their own text are counted as writing exercises. Unfortunately, I was not able to attach examples of the content of the textbooks to this paper for copyright reasons. However, all the books can be found at the Helsinki University Library.

#### *Canada Korean*

The *New Canada Korean for Foreigners Elementary 1* (henceforth referred to as *Canada*) contains thirty chapters and an appendix, including answers to exercises, listening scripts, reading translations, word index, grammar index, and conjugation sheets. The book is available in English, Chinese and Japanese versions, and it contains an MP3 CD. The audio files are by native Korean speakers. The book was originally made to be used in Canada Korean Language Institute.

The first three chapters before the actual chapters begin are dedicated to learning the *hangul*. The book introduces the Korean writing system with a little bit of history, phonetics, syllable structure, and sentence structure. The *hangul* chapters contain various exercises for learning to recognize and write the letters as well as proper pronunciation. They also include vocabulary. *Hangul* is introduced in writing and audio formats and rehearsed with two listening exercises and one reading exercise in each chapter. The chapters also include three vocabulary activities that revolve around learning to read, pronounce, and recognize the sounds of *hangul*.

Chapters 4–30 are constructed of clearly separated and marked parts. They begin with a dialogue set as the main text which is then followed by a translation thereof, and a grammar section with explanations and examples. These are not included in the data used in this research, as explained above. The pattern drill section includes exercises to rehearse basic sentence patterns, and new vocabulary. These exercises were categorized as ‘other’, because they do not require active productive or receptive skills, but are, as the name suggests, mechanical drills to get accustomed to new expressions. The exercises of the listening and reading sections are categorized respectively. Some tasks under the reading section are counted

as speaking exercises, when they require conversation or other verbal action. Finally, all exercises in the activity section (‘활동’) are categorized as speaking exercises. The culture section did not contain tasks.

#### *Sogang hangukeo*

The *Sogang Korean New Series 1A* (henceforth referred to as *Sogang*) consists of four parts: introducing the *Hangul*, four preparatory chapters, six actual chapters, and the appendix, including audio file transcripts, English translations, and the CD contents list. The audio CD includes listening passages in normal and slow speeds. The book series was first made for use in Sogang University’s Korean Language Education Center. The series includes textbooks, workbooks, and supplementary books for grammar and vocabulary. Its goal is to increase the students’ communicative competence in a short time period.

The *hangul* is introduced in four phases and practiced with a total of 29 exercises. The preparatory chapters consist of mostly verbal activities, altogether 50. These are not included in the data as they are preparation for the actual chapters, or a kind of warm-up. The six relevant chapters consist of an introduction presenting the lesson objectives, a grammar section, dialogues, a task, a reading section, a listening section, and a summary of the grammar, vocabulary, and expressions used in the chapter.

The categorization of the exercises mostly follows that of the book. The introduction, other preparatory material, and the dialogues themselves are not included in the data. As the book has labelled all parts under speaking (‘말하기’), grammar and dialogue drills have been considered as speaking exercises. The task in each chapter has been considered to be in the ‘other’ category as it utilizes many different language skills and is thus impossible to categorize in just one. The reading and writing sections include one writing task each.

#### *Seouldae hangukeo*

The *Seouldae hangukeo 1A* book (henceforth referred to as *Seouldae*) consists of a *hangul* section, eight chapters, a grammar extension, a culture

extension, an answer key and a glossary. It was originally made for international students studying Korean in Seoul University. The book includes an audio CD. The book series includes textbooks and workbooks up to advanced levels.

The *hangul* section of the book explains some history of the writing system and the principles of how they were formed. It introduces the letters with their sound value as well as in written form, and explains how syllables are formed. The exercises focus on pronunciation, recognition by listening, and writing practice – comprehension is secondary to getting familiar with new sounds and a new writing system.

The eight chapters are divided into clear sections. They begin with introducing key vocabulary by category along with pictures. Second, the grammar and expression section gives dialogues, example sentences, and exercises. The latter are categorized as speaking tasks in the data, even though they resemble drills, because their instructions stated that they were to be done verbally. Similarly, all activities in the speaking section, and the speaking (‘말하기’) part of the listening section are counted as speaking exercises. For listening, the data includes both listening to the audio track and a task with a comprehension check. Also, in the reading section, both reading the text and doing the comprehension check have been counted as reading exercises. The writing categorization also follows that of the book. Neither the preparatory sections marked with ‘준비’ nor the cultural notes have been included in the data. Exercises designed to rehearse vocabulary and the 과제-tasks have been put in an ‘other’-category. Finally, the pronunciation exercises were categorized as speaking. The chapters end with a self-check and review.

#### *Fun! Fun! Korean*

The *Fun! Fun! Korean 1* book (henceforth referred to as *Fun Korean*) claims its focus on “communication, speaking activities and having fun” (pp. 6–9). It consists of a preliminary unit introducing the *hangul*, 15 chapters, listening transcripts, answers, a vocabulary glossary, and two audio CDs. It was

originally made by the Korean Language & Culture Center in Korea University for students learning Korean. The book series includes textbooks and workbooks up to the advanced level.

The *hangul* unit introduces the phonetics of the Korean alphabet, and how to read and write it. However, it does not contain a lot of exercises for practice. This means that either the teacher must have access to extra materials or use a lot of interactive games in-class for the students to rehearse writing and pronouncing to the point of automatization. It is also possible, that exercises can be found in the workbook to save space in the textbook.

The 15 chapters are constructed of roughly six parts: goals, introduction, dialogue & story, speaking practice, activities, and grammar. The goals page summarizes the content and the introduction guides the students towards the topic of the chapter. Dialogues and stories have been considered as the main text and thus are not included in the data. The speaking practice section is categorized according to the books own classification although its exercises are drill-like vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation activities. The activity part includes most of the exercises, which are clearly divided into listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and categorized as such. The chapters end with self-check, cultural notes, and explanations of grammar, none of which contains the quantitative data relevant to this research. They will, however, be included in the qualitative analysis.

### 3.2 The qualitative evaluation criteria

The four books have been evaluated in two aspects: how they take into consideration different parts of language skills, and how they take into account learners' personal differences, specifically in the context of the Finnish adult learner. The first part includes receptive and productive language skills, pragmalinguistic skills, and cultural knowledge. The second part includes learners' personal differences such as language background, age, and learning strategies. The criteria used for the analyses are formed

from the theories and ideas that were introduced in chapter two. The results are not and cannot be definitive, but could rather be viewed as a general guide for deciding which book to use, or to at least know the advantages and shortcomings of each book.

Firstly, does the book make use of the steep learning curve of the beginning? Introducing a lot of vocabulary and grammar at the beginner level and providing chances to put them to practice is an effective use of a textbook of this level. Is new information presented thematically, building on previous knowledge? The books should have plenty of both creative exercises and pattern drills to involve different parts of the brain, and bind information together, thus making it easier to remember.

Second, how many and what kind of chances does the book provide to improve listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills? If the book's audio CD includes more tracks than listening comprehension exercises, and the tracks are transcribed in the book, listening can be rehearsed outside the classroom. Furthermore, if the book has translations to main texts and reading comprehension texts, reading can also be practiced outside the classroom. Providing chances for self-study for both understanding the content and the language of the material improves listening and reading skills. Listening and repeating the sounds of the target language from a track improve pronunciation, which is the basis of speaking skills. Textbooks should provide opportunities to get familiar with Korean phonemes and practice producing them correctly. Verbally executed pattern drills can help to form muscle memory for individual sounds, but also frequently used words and expressions. Although writing skills do not develop very far in the beginner level, learning to write in *hangul*, and form syllables and sentences should be put down as foundation.

Third, how much and what kind of pragmalinguistic exercises do the books have? Pair or group work involves not only the learners' speaking skills, but rather their conversational skills, including listening, speaking and social skills, and cultural knowledge. Communicating in the target language is the

main type of creative exercise the books can have when writing is not emphasized at the beginner level and receptive skill practice does not require creative output from the learner. Furthermore, the books can be evaluated by their cultural content. Culture and language are intertwined, so the thought process and customs can be seen in the language and content implicitly. What is the quality of the input – are the texts and tracks authentic, natural language<sup>3</sup> produced by native Koreans? Do the books also contain explicit cultural notes, such as a cultural information box in each chapter?

Concerning the learners' personal differences, the main points are language background, age, learning strategies, and attitude/motivation. Finnish adult learners have typically studied at least three languages: Finnish, English and Swedish, and often one European language more, such as French or German. None of these languages are related to Korean, so similarities are scarce. Furthermore, contact with Korean is limited as the Korean population in Finland was 609 in 2016 (Tilastokeskus) and there are no significant broadcasts or cultural events in the Korean language. The language background of the Finnish adult learner is limited in terms of contact with Korean, but vast in terms of experience in learning foreign languages. This puts the textbook under pressure as the primary source of input, but also in expectations of the learners. Providing chances of comparison between Korean and previously learned languages, as well as offering instructions and explanations in English are ways to meet those demands.

The books should take into account at least four things to cater for adult learners. As learning has more to do with the length of exposure rather than an early start, it is important to keep in mind the intended instructional hours of the books – in relation to the amount of content, and in comparison of the other books. Adults benefit from self-study and continuous feedback. How do the books meet this demand? In terms of learning style, do the books explicitly teach rules before practicing, or do they require the learner to use

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<sup>3</sup> Language produced by native speakers in real-life situations.

their own inductive skills to determine the rule from examples? Either style works, as adults are generally more analytic and can thus generate rules from examples, even though the former style is usually better for the beginner level. Finally, are the contents of the books age-appropriate and interesting for adults? This has ultimately to do with the goals of each individual learner, but generally it can be said that adults can handle more complex topics and social situations than children due to their general knowledge of life.

There is not much learning material alone can do to affect learners' strategies, attitude, or motivation. The exercises and other content should consider the different learning strategies so that certain learners are not left out or their styles dismissed. The difficulty level should not be too high, and the content should aim to be pleasant and interesting in an attempt to keep learners motivated. Or can the motivation of adult learners be assumed since learning Korean is not mandatory but voluntary? It can be generally assumed that if the books are logically and predictably structured, they are easier to use and to understand even if learners' tastes in design, pictures, or order of the material may vary.

### 3.3 Possible pitfalls

A few problems arose while conducting this research. First, the categorization inarguably varies between the books. In order to follow the books' own principles of exercise distribution as closely as possible, some drills have been categorized as speaking activities when similar tasks in other books have been included in the 'other' category. This creates inconsistency in the results. Also, as the main texts and dialogues have been excluded and not all CD tracks have been considered individual listening activities, the reported amounts of reading and listening exercises are not completely applicable. Of course, some variation is unavoidable also due to different teachers, courses and students using the same books. Entirely objective, definite, and consistent results are impossible to achieve in textbook research.

Second, the learning hours each book covers are not the same. *Seouldae* and *Sogang* were both developed for similar durations of class work. The former covers 100 hours, and the latter 75–100 hours. Neither *Ganada* or *Fun Korean* list their intended learning hours, but the information is published at the Ganada Language Institute's website (Ganada Korean 2018) and the Korea University's website (Korea University Korean Language Center 2018): about 96 hours and 200 hours, respectively. This creates problems of ending level – although the books all start from zero, they end at different levels. Can they be compared to each other? In order to get to similar instructional hours, *Fun Korean* should be cut in half, or more textbooks from the other three series should be included in the research. However, this study compares the books used in the beginning, on the learners' first course of Korean language. The books were made for different institutes with different syllabi – the ending level is irrelevant. How well or to how high a level different textbook series teach the language is a subject of another study. I will take the differences in the intended instructional times into account in the individual textbook analyses in the next chapter.

Third, qualitative analysis is never objective. I have attempted to look at the material as objectively as possible, but much like there are individual differences that affect language learning, there are differences in how people would view, grade and value the same material as I have. My personal academic background, learning style et cetera affect my way of reviewing the material. Nevertheless, if we accept that neither qualitative analyses nor textbook reviews can be entirely objective, we can accept the results as something to critically observe, and agree or disagree with them from our individual circumstances.



## 4 The textbook analyses

This chapter presents the analyses of each book. The analyses include discussion on the exercise distribution in terms of listening, reading, speaking, writing, and un-categorizable activities, as well as some qualitative examination of said exercises. The qualitative criteria include points on different aspects of language skills, as well as the learners' language background, age, and other personal differences. The results are discussed in relation to these criteria to gain better understanding on how the textbooks fit in to the Finnish learning environment. Further comparisons are made in terms of the amount of grammar, vocabulary, exercises, and which piece(s) of language skills the books emphasize with their exercises.

### 4.1 *Ganada*

*Ganada* stood out from the other three books in many ways. It included the most grammar, emphasized receptive more than productive skills, and contained a large amount of pattern drills. In terms of vocabulary, finishing the book brings the learner two thirds of the way to TOPIK level 1. CEFR levels are described more ambiguously as they are designed for multiple languages, so assessing the student's CEFR level after finishing *Ganada* (or any of the other books) is too subjective and will not be done in this study.

Concerning language skills, *Ganada* fares average. It contains a large amount of grammar, a total of 72 grammar points, and a fair amount of vocabulary as well to make use of the steep learning curve of the beginning. "Vocabulary and grammar are arranged considering the degree of difficulty and the frequency of use by stages." (*Ganada* 2010: 3.) New information is introduced in themes by chapter, such as introducing oneself (Chapter 4), making plans (Chapter 18), or asking and giving directions (Chapter 29). The verb and adjective conjugation tables in the appendix are also beneficial to the adult learner. The grammar points are explained in English in the chapters, and a list of the grammar points and the page number can

be found in the appendix. As for exercises, Figure 1 below shows the exercise distribution of the *Ganada* textbook.

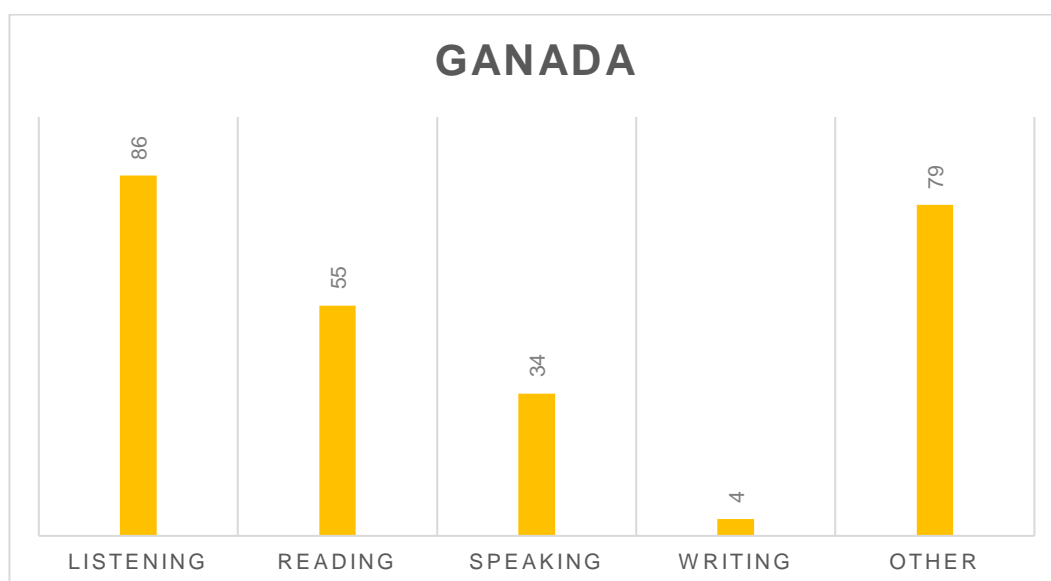


Figure 1. *Ganada* exercise distribution

The book offers plenty of opportunities (86) to practice listening as self-study or in the classroom. The main texts, pattern drill instructions and examples, and of course the listening comprehension exercises are all included in the audio CD. It is important for the book to provide as much input as possible for the learner in an environment where the target language is rarely heard outside the classroom, as is the situation in Finland. Everything is transcribed either in the chapter or in the appendix, but the content is up to the learner to translate and understand.

Reading skills can be practiced with the main text and the reading section (55 activities). Both are translated to English: former in the chapter and the latter in the appendix. The new words and expressions introduced in each section are listed at the end of the sections – this helps to understand the content and language of the input. It also gives the adult learner a chance to compare the two languages and find similarities and differences, which helps to learn a new language. Not everything is translated, which improves the inductive skills, but it could also make learning slower and more frustrating if the content is not understood.

*Ganada* contains 34 speaking exercises. Speaking practice starts with pronunciation. The first three chapters dedicated to learning the *hangul* offer opportunities to learn the correct pronunciation of the Korean alphabet. The *hangul* are presented with their IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) forms, and the exercises concentrate on recognizing and producing the Korean phonemes correctly. All pronunciation practice starts with hearing the correct forms, so repeating after the audio tracks is important. Learning correct pronunciation and speaking is almost impossible to do alone, so the teacher's role here is more important than the book's – although in the case of a non-native instructor, the book can provide more accurate pronunciation. The main texts and pattern drills can be used to practice speaking, but this is semi-productive at best. The real challenge for speaking skills is the 활동-activity where the students are required to create their own content. These activities develop the students' pragmalinguistic skills as they require them to produce their own speech, understand what others are saying, and often summarize what was talked about. These conversational skills are crucial in gaining communicative competence.

Writing skills are given the least focus in *Ganada* (4 activities). Practice begins with learning how to write the *hangul* and how to form syllables. The book's four writing tasks were extensions of reading sections and could, in fact, be used as speaking practice as well. Some exercises in other categories required the student to form their own sentences. For example, a writing assignment was included in a 활동-activity on page 155 ("Write down your schedule."). All in all, writing practice is very scarce in *Ganada*.

As a whole, *Ganada* offers a variety of exercises, both mechanical and creative. Out of its 258 exercises, less than half are pattern drills designed to get students accustomed to new expressions and grammar. A lot of the other exercises are comprehension checks while largely only the activity marked with 활동 (lit. trans. 'activity') requires the creativity of the learner. As each chapter only contained one, I must conclude that *Ganada* is not ideal for gaining communicative competence. It relies too heavily on pattern

drills and receptive language skills, and while introducing a lot of vocabulary and grammar, it does not offer much opportunities for the learners to use them creatively.

Cultural elements are prominent throughout the book. *Ganada* was made in South Korea, by Koreans, and for students living in South Korea. Although the texts are scripted and thus not natural language, they are written by native Koreans. Similarly, although the language is not natural, the audio tracks are voiced by native Korean speakers. Korean culture is presented implicitly in the chapters by presenting new information of the language through topics like food, locations, celebrities, popular pastimes, and customs. Each chapter also includes an explicit presentation of culture with a “Take a look at Korean culture” -information box.

Concerning the learners’ personal differences, how does *Ganada* meet the expectations of their language backgrounds, age, and personal affective goals? First, all explanations from how to pronounce the *hangul* to cultural notes are offered in English. The instructions to all exercises are written in both Korean and English, and the sound values of the *hangul* are represented with IPA. The main texts are translated in English on the next page with relevant vocabulary. New vocabulary is presented in pieces after each section of a chapter. Translations to the reading comprehension exercises are in the appendix. The book uses a lot of pictures instead of translations, for example a word list of family relations includes a family tree with the corresponding Korean words for the persons in it (p. 55), although most of the words are introduced in the word lists earlier in the chapter as well. The English translations are at times a little stiff, but they are not literal translations, word for word. They are somewhere in between stiff, sometimes non-sensical literal translations, and natural, idiomatic translations, just as most foreign language textbooks.

Second, *Ganada* does not list its intended instructional hours. According to the Ganada Korean Language Institute – the creator of the *Ganada* textbooks – one textbook is completed in two months of classroom

instruction, 12 hours per week (Ganada Korean 2018). This equals 96 intended instructional hours. The book provides listening scripts and answers to listening and reading exercises in the appendix. A separate workbook is available for purchase. Learning material is always limited in what it can offer as feedback. Naturally, the texts can be translated as self-study, and checked checked for mistakes in the back of the book. The CD can also be listened to correct pronunciation errors, but this is probably too difficult at this level. A teacher is needed for feedback and checking the more creative exercises.

In Ganada, Korean grammar is explained in English along with some examples, followed by pattern drills rehearsing said grammar points. Some 활동-activities also resemble drills in that an example is given, and the exercise should be conducted according to the model. Sometimes, however, a form that has not been learned is used in the texts. This book follows the rule-first-exercise-second -pattern, and does not rehearse inductive skills much.

*Ganada* is directed towards (young) adults and the topics revolve around working, traveling and food rather than school-life. The content caters to students living in Korea, but many topics, such as life in a dormitory, seem rather insignificant for students learning Korean in Finland. For learners that are planning to study or live in Korea, these are useful in a concrete way, but for others they serve more as an implicit way to introduce Korean student culture. Generally, the themes seem interesting, appropriate, and grow more complex at a reasonable pace.

Third, the book is logically constructed and executed. One could say that motivation is supported by the gradual rise in the level of difficulty, relevant topics, and level-appropriate exercises. What it lacks is productive activities to gain courage to use Korean. Particularly when there is a workbook to go with the textbook, the latter should concentrate more on communicative exercises and leave drills and easily self-studied activities to the former.

In conclusion, *Ganada* offers a lot of opportunities for practicing the Korean language, but falls short on creative, communicative exercises. Culture is presented both implicitly and explicitly. The wide use of English makes comparisons between English and Korean possible, and instructions easy and quick to understand. Although, this also poses the threat of students only looking at the English translations and not learning the Korean counterparts. The book gives opportunities for self-study, but alone is not enough to provide sufficient feedback. Rules are traditionally presented before exercises, which is good for adult learners. The topics offer a lot of implicit cultural knowledge, but are not all relevant for students learning Korean in Finland. All in all, *Ganada* is logically constructed, easy to use, and maintains the learners' motivation, but lacks exercises that encourage Finnish learners to use the target language creatively.

#### 4.2 Fun! Fun! Korean

*Fun Korean*, which is used at the Helsinki Summer University, contains large quantities of vocabulary and exercises with an emphasis on speaking activities. The aim of the book was to produce a fun way of learning Korean, and encourage learners to produce speech as early as possible. With 51 grammar points and 738 words and expressions, *Fun Korean* is similarly ambitious to *Ganada*, yet puts more emphasis on verbal language skills. It also comes closest to the required competence of 800 words for TOPIK level 1.

The book contains a lot of vocabulary and a fair amount of grammar to make use of the exponential learning curve of the beginner level. New information is clearly presented by theme: each chapter has its own unique topic and goals presented on the first page. Although the book contains a wide vocabulary, the lack of repetition leads to a shallow knowledge of it. This could be due to thematization of the chapters – when one theme is finished, the connected vocabulary is not necessarily relevant to later themes. Naturally, grammar repeats more often throughout the chapters.

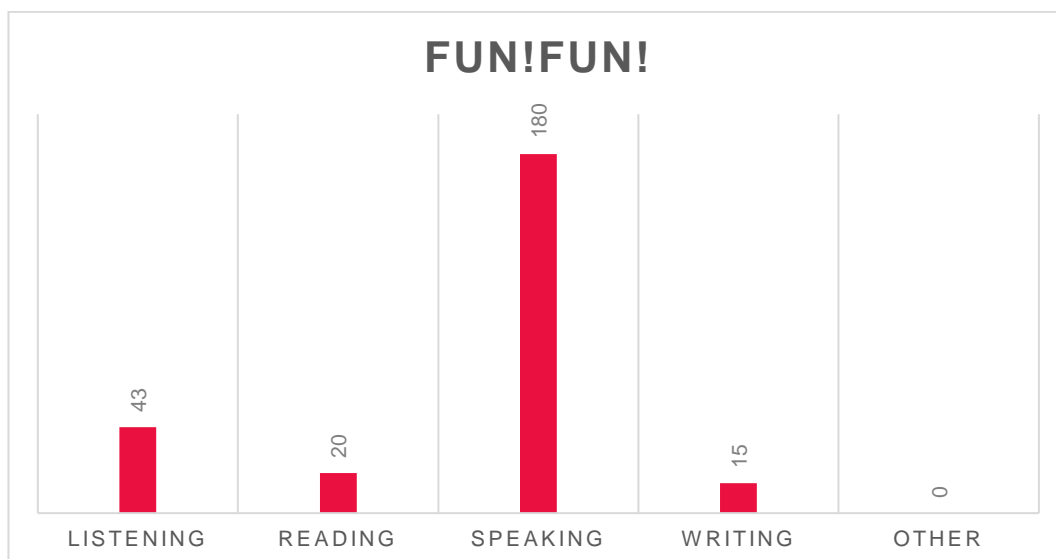


Figure 2. *Fun! Fun! Korean* exercise distribution

As can be seen in Figure 2 above, *Fun Korean* contains a lot of exercises with a heavy emphasis on speaking activities. The large amount of exercises, creative and drill-like, helps to automatize newly learned aspects of the Korean language by letting students use them in different ways. It must be noted, however, that even though statistically the book does not have drills (see the ‘other’ category), some speaking exercises were constructed like pattern drills.

*Fun Korean* contains two audio CDs with a total of 52 tracks for listening input, ranging from *hangul* practice to dialogues and listening exercises. Its 43 listening exercises is a decent amount for one book. They are “constructed in stages of ‘vocabulary listening – sentence listening – text listening’” (p.8) to build the students’ listening proficiency naturally. The comprehension exercises contain open ended questions, true/false choices, word and number recognition and overall understanding of the content of the dialogues. Even though the texts and audio are made and recorded by native speakers, the input is not natural language. However, the correct sounds of the *hangul* can be listened to from the CD.

*Fun Korean* presents different types of texts, such as emails, menus, Internet bulletin boards, receipts, notes et cetera, for students to familiarize with, along with the main texts and dialogues. With 20 reading activities, the

reading sections are complete with exercises to check comprehension, including multiple choice and open-ended questions. Relevant vocabulary with its English equivalents are presented on the side. The *hangul* introduction at the beginning of the book is compact with just a few chances of practice, which places the burden of sufficient *hangul* practice on teachers, as extra material may be needed.

Speaking exercises (180) take up most of the book. The drill-like activities that practice grammar, vocabulary and other key topics of a chapter are verbal. The speaking sections follow the topics of the corresponding chapters and rehearse the students for real life encounters. The exercises consist of dialogues and narrative talks, such as presentations. *Fun Korean* also provides pronunciation units within the chapters to explain how certain words and expressions are pronounced accurately.

Each chapter of *Fun Korean* contains one writing exercise (total 15), which is a reasonable amount in the beginner level. The topics vary from self-introduction to addresses, shopping lists and descriptive narrative texts. There are little explicit exercises to learn to write the *hangul*, form syllables and sentences. These are, of course, implicitly learned through other exercises, but otherwise require extra material from the teacher. It is possible, that the Workbook contains more practice on *hangul*.

In essence, the speaking section is also the conversation, or pragmalinguistic section. The exercises require interaction between students, and include both pre-scripted and more open-ended speaking activities. They are fewer in number than the speaking drills – one or two in each chapter. Cultural information can be found explicitly in specialized parts of the chapters as well as implicitly throughout the book, for example in pictures and texts. This is natural for a book originally made for foreign students learning Korean in South Korea – it is assumed that students come to contact with the target language in their everyday life outside the classroom.



*Fun Korean* has many beneficial characteristics for Finnish adult learners. It includes instructions for the exercises, and explanations of grammar and culture in English, which makes them easier to understand for a beginner. The *hangul* is presented in their Korean form as well as their IPA form, so students can compare the sounds of their mother tongue or other previously learned languages to Korean sounds. Relevant vocabulary in Korean and English is provided next to the main texts and dialogues to help the student understand the content and how Korean expressions and sentences are constructed.

The points above, combined with the self-check in each chapter and the appendix, enable learners to study independently as well, which is beneficial to adult learners. The intended instructional time for one book is 10 weeks, or 200 hours (Korea University Korean Language Center 2018). Instructional hours are limited no matter where the learning takes place, so opportunities for self-study are important. In terms of feedback, no book can offer much other than correct answers, good explanations of grammar if the learners need to correct their mistakes, and transcripts of listening exercises to rehearse listening abilities. *Fun Korean* provides all of these: answers to the exercises and listening transcripts in the appendix, and English explanations of grammar rules in each chapter. Furthermore, the grammar can be learned by applying the ready-given rules to the exercises, or by inducting the rules from the main texts, example sentences and exercises. This gives the book flexibility and accommodates different kinds of learners. Also, the themes and general content are relevant for adults, specifically for young adults living in Korea.

*Fun Korean* aims to make learning fun and thus keep up the learners' motivation. Pictures and colours are used as visual aids and help to remember. The units are constructed logically, and everything can be found with relative ease. Drill-like activities make it difficult to make a lot of big mistakes, so learners get positive learning experiences while the creative exercises are more challenging. Together they are aimed to keep the learner motivated.

To conclude, *Fun Korean* is a textbook of many advantages. It has a lot of content and a variety of exercises to make use of the steep learning curve of the beginning. The exercises are a mixture of drill-like tasks and more creative activities with an emphasis on verbal skills. However, there is not enough repetition to efficiently learn new vocabulary, and although the emphasis of the exercises is on verbal skills, only a few of them require creativity and conversational skills. Also, the language constructed for educational purposes and thus not natural. In terms of learners' personal differences, *Fun Korean* fares well. It uses English to instruct and explain, which makes it easier to compare and attach new information to learners' earlier knowledge of foreign languages. Self-study and feedback opportunities are offered as much as is possible in a textbook, and a lot of thought is given to keep the students' motivation up. The general content of *Fun Korean* is relevant for adults, and the book takes into account different learning styles. In general, the advantages of *Fun Korean* are the amount of consideration it has been given to make it interesting, and its heavy emphasis on verbal skills.

#### 4.3 Sogang

Out of the four books, *Sogang Korean 1A* contains the least amount of both grammar and vocabulary. They are listed at the end of each chapter to review if the goals of the chapter have been met. After finishing the book, students should know 355 Korean words, which covers less than half of the required 800 words for TOPIK level 1. New information is introduced in themes, such as introductions and greetings in preparatory chapter 준비 1, or rehearsing numbers in Chapter 1. Figure 3 below illustrates the exercise distribution in *Sogang*.

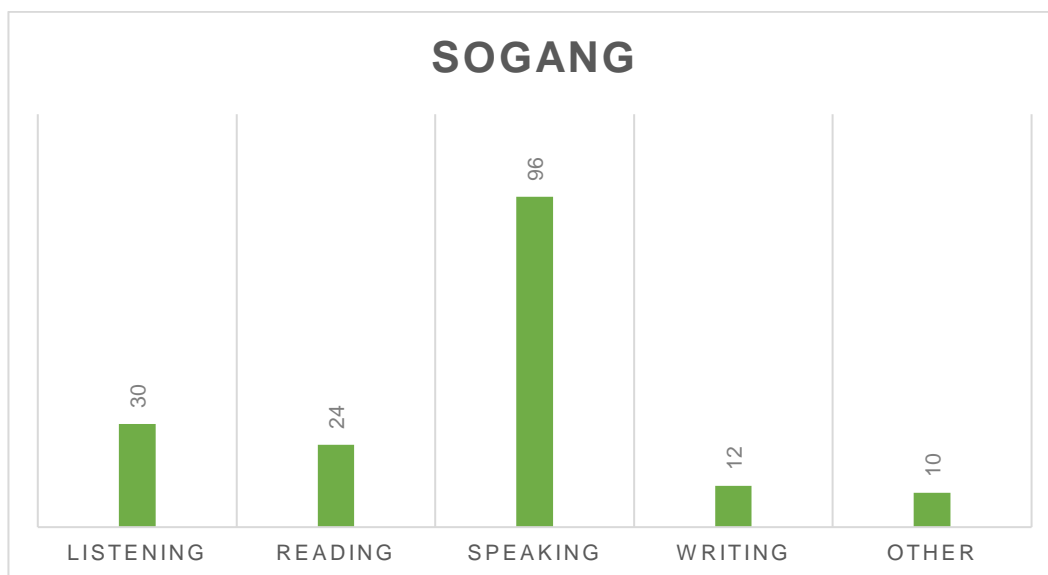


Figure 3. *Sogang* exercise distribution

*Sogang* contains 30 listening exercises. The basic structure of *Sogang*'s listening sections is introducing the topic, listening to the track, exercises, and speaking practice in the same topic. The exercises consist of comprehension checks and sound/word recognition. The CD contains 80 tracks including dialogues, reading comprehension texts, pronunciation practice, and listening exercises. Listening scripts for the latter can be found in the book's appendix, so self-study and revision is also possible. All in all, *Sogang* provides a fair amount of various kinds of opportunities to practice listening skills by aiming to understand the language and the content of the input.

Reading skills begin with learning the *hangul*, which *Sogang* executes in four units. The book has an innovative way of rehearsing the Korean writing system with games rather than mechanical repetition. The dialogues in each chapter can also be used as reading practice. The reading section consists of a warm up with pictures, reading portion, comprehension check, and an after reading part. The comprehension checks are a mixture of verbal and literal exercises with both fill-in-the-blanks and free form types. 24 reading exercises is a fair amount, especially considering that each chapter includes one text specifically for reading practice and three exercises to check the comprehension.

About half of the book (96 exercises) is speaking practice, or even more if the exercises in the preparatory and *hangul* chapters are included – the preparatory chapters consist of verbal activities only. Speaking is present in all the different sections of the chapters, activities ranging from pattern drills to free conversation (talking about a topic), pronunciation practice to answering reading/listening comprehension check questions.

The 12 writing exercises are mostly summaries of what the students have discussed after reading and listening exercises. This kind of short and simple writing activities suit the beginner level well, so even though *Sogang* contains the most writing exercises in relation to the overall amount of exercises, it is not excessive. Furthermore, other exercises do not offer many opportunities to practice spelling, so the larger amount of purely writing exercises is reasonable.

The 10 activities in the ‘other’ category include 과제-tasks and games, which can also be considered pragmalinguistic or conversational exercises. The preparatory chapters also have some similar activities, and the *hangul* is learned through four interactive games. A lot of the speaking exercises are also pair work, which further adds to the students’ conversational skill practice.

Cultural knowledge is all presented implicitly in *Sogang*. There are no special culture information boxes or texts. The cultural information comes in place names, the conversations they have, and the illustrations in the book. Explicit explanations of Korean culture, or “Culture capsules” are found in the workbook that is meant to help reviewing at home.

It is possible to compare English and Korean with *Sogang*, but it does not seem to encourage it much. The instructions for the exercises are in English, and the translations to dialogues and texts can be found in the appendix. However, though the book uses a lot of visual aids to protrude the meaning, it does not give translations to the titles of the chapters, or a separate vocabulary list in the appendix. The end of each chapter lists the grammar, vocabulary and expressions learned in the chapter, but there are no

translations included. This is probably a conscious choice designed to help students communicate and think in Korean from the very beginning as is stated in the introduction to the book. In addition, only consonants at the end of syllables (받침) are presented in IPA – *Sogang* only offers the sound values of the Hangul in their written and spoken form. This can help but can also confuse learners needlessly.

Self-study with the textbook is nearly impossible as it is designed for classroom use. *Sogang*'s intended instructional hours are between 75–100. For reviewing, vocabulary index, and grammar explanations, there are separate Grammar and Vocabulary Supplementary book and the Workbook. The CD can be listened to independently using listening scripts as support, and learning the content of the texts and dialogues in the book can also be done alone with the translations. Other than that, self-study opportunities are close to none. *Sogang* does not offer answer sheets or much other kind of feedback either, so using it as a textbook always requires a teacher.

*Sogang* introduces new grammar through sentences/utterances and visual aids such as pictures, but does not explain how or when it is used. A model is given, followed by a practice run with set content, and finally a speaking activity with free(r) content. The new grammar and vocabulary is rehearsed throughout the chapter, but no real explanations are ever given. *Sogang* relies heavily on the instructor. Based solely on the textbook, it leans more towards inductive learning.

The topics are relevant to student life, and the syllabus focuses on a communicative approach to a classroom setting. Real-life activities and classroom activities are aimed to help students meet their educational goals. While this is a meaningful and effective approach in Korea, adult students learning Korean in Finland may find some contents of the book confusing and irrelevant. Emphasizing communicative competence without providing chances for students to check whether they have understood the material can be counter-productive.

*Sogang* caters to students who like figuring out rules by themselves, and need to use the language in different situations to learn. It can be confusing and frustrating for learners who need translations and explanations, like to work individually, or are very shy. Being able to communicate from the start, even simply, can be very motivating for some students, while for others, the stress can lower the motivation and hinder learning. The structure of the book is logical and consistent, but the lack of a vocabulary index and grammar explanations are probably the biggest complaints people have of the *Sogang* textbook. Encouraging students to speak from early on is a suitable goal for the Finnish setting, but it can be very stressful as well. A good book balances the need for practice and the need to understand the structure of the target language.

In conclusion, *Sogang* is a textbook that emphasizes speaking activities and relies on the teacher for explanations and feedback. The exercises support one another by using earlier learned content in different contexts and task types, which helps the learners form a network of knowledge on Korean. Although the emphasis of the exercises was on speaking, most of them were not creative. The range of creative and non-creative tasks was reasonable for a beginner level textbook. Culture was only presented implicitly.

Furthermore, the lack of English explanations and translations can cause confusion and frustration. Making comparisons between previously known languages and Korean and self-study are difficult, and the book offers very little feedback. It places the burden on the teacher to explain the rules of Korean language, and translate words and expressions that are not understood by context or pictures only. With the help of a good teacher, adult learners with analytical skills can still excel with the *Sogang* textbook.

#### 4.4 Seouldae

With 32 grammar points and 446 words and expressions, *Seouldae 1A* enables learners to reach halfway to TOPIK level 1. Vocabulary is presented with pictures in the vocabulary section, and relevant words are listed at the

end of each part of the chapter. They are practiced in the book as well as in the CD ROM in various kinds of exercises, explicitly in the vocabulary section and implicitly in other types of exercises. Grammar is introduced with dialogues and example sentences. An extensive grammar appendix at the end of the book gives more detailed explanations on the grammar points. The grammar sections of each chapter offer mainly pattern drills for practice, but the new information is used in other exercises. The Task-section of each chapter enables the students to use the vocabulary and grammar they have learned in the chapter more creatively and actively.

Each chapter introduces a theme, for example weather and travelling in Chapter 7, and presents vocabulary and exercises relevant to that theme. Some parts of the themes are repeated and elaborated on in later chapters, such as locations or schedules. The majority of the exercises are pattern drills or drill-like activities where learners are given an example dialogue or sentence and different words to practice. Each chapter does have a creative 과제-task that requires learners to use the language they have learned so far and interact with each other, along with a couple of other creative exercises. Figure 4 below shows the exercise distribution by type.

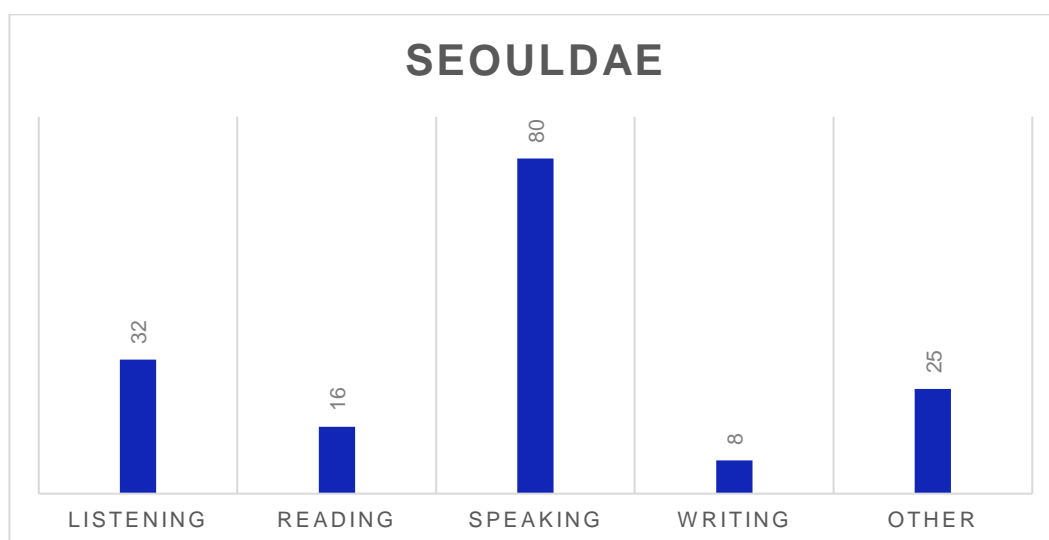


Figure 4. *Seouldae* exercise distribution

The CD in *Seouldae* is a CD-ROM that contains 89 tracks, covering the *hangul*, vocabulary rehearsing activities, example sentences and dialogues,

and listening exercises. It provides exercises for vocabulary, grammar and speaking, texts for reading, transcripts, vocabulary and grammar lists, and supplementary materials for the class room along with mp3 files. Listening scripts are also included in the book's appendix. Listening skill practice is convenient even as self-study.

The listening sections of each chapter offer a preparation and two comprehension check exercises. The preparation parts are an efficient way to activate the corresponding schema in the learners' brain to connect the new information to the old. 32 exercises out of 161 is a fair amount dedicated to listening skills, a little short of 20%.

*Seouldae* provides example sentences and dialogues, but tends to use more pictures than texts, so reading practice is confined mostly to the examples and the reading section. The culture extension in the appendix also offers texts in both Korean and English, which is useful for self-study. Some history behind the *hangul* is introduced in Korean and English as well.

The *hangul* are presented and rehearsed carefully and extensively. Reading practice starts with the identification and connection of a letter and sound, then reading word lists with pictures. The reading sections contain preparation, reading, and comprehension checks. The 16 reading exercises are a good amount for the beginner level, but the book does not offer much reading opportunities as longer texts but rather as short dialogues and sentences. Reading material is easy for a teacher to find, for example from the Internet, but it can be difficult to find material of the appropriate difficulty level.

About half (80) of the exercises in *Seouldae* are speaking exercises. The grammar and expression sections include exercises that resemble pattern drills, but require some creativity as they instruct to make dialogues or other conversation according to the provided examples. The speaking sections are designed to practice vocabulary and grammar, and contain a pattern drill as well as a more creative speaking exercise. The listening section also contains a speaking activity to provide learners the opportunity to "construct



conversations related to the theme and function of the listening task” (p.8). In addition, *Seouldae* has pronunciation practice in every chapter, with preparation, pronunciation rule, and an exercise.

The 8 writing exercises are connected to the reading and writing section, where the reading part offers reference for the content, form and vocabulary. One writing task per chapter is a good amount in the beginner level, when literal productive language skills are not yet very developed. Although it is just copying, practicing how to write the *hangul* and forming syllables is an important skill, and it is practiced in the beginning of the book in 8 activities.

Conversational skills are practiced with 과제-tasks that aim to build fluency by communicating using the vocabulary and grammar used in the chapter. The tasks consist of 3-4 steps and require learners to use all of their language skills in a group. These are the exercises that demand the most creativity by giving minimal amount of examples and the most creative freedom with what and how to speak.

According to its Preface (p.4), *Seouldae* conveys culture through pictures, explanations [of particular cultural aspects], and opportunities for intercultural comparisons. The book does use a lot of pictures and photos for both implicit and explicit learning of Korean culture. The Culture Note - section explains specific cultural points like public holidays or kimchi<sup>4</sup>, and the culture extension in the appendix further elaborates on the issues. Each section ends with a chance to compare Korean culture and the learners' own culture, which helps this type of explicit learning. The quality of input from the book is high, as the authors hold degrees on Korean language and literature, education, or Korean studies. The book does not state whether the voices on the CD are native speakers. Although the language is not authentic in that it is not natural language but scripted, it is made up by professionals of Korean language.

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<sup>4</sup> Fermented vegetables, e.g. Napa cabbage or radish

*Seouldae* offers instructions to all the exercises in Korean and English. There are no official main texts, but the English translations for dialogues can be found at the end of each chapter, and wordlists are available at the bottom of the page as well as in the ‘Translation’ section at the end of each chapter. The grammar presented in the dialogues is not explained in the chapter, but rather in the appendix, again both in Korean and English. The English explanations are shorter than their Korean equivalents – much like summaries – and this can be confusing without the help of a teacher.

As the instructions and explanations are presented in both Korean and English, students are able to compare the two languages fairly easily. The *hangul* is presented with their sound value in IPA, translations to unfamiliar words are given at the bottom of the page, and the appendix includes a large section that explains the grammar points in English as well as gives the English equivalent of certain expressions when it exists. These English explanations can be difficult to understand for a Finnish learner, as they require the reader to know the terms of English grammar rather well, for example what a predicate is.

The first level of the Korean language program at the Seoul National University contains about 200 hours of class work (*Seouldae 1A* 2013: 3–4.; SNU LEI “Curriculum”). Each level covers two books; level 1 consists of books 1A and 1B (SNU LEI “Course materials”). Therefore, *Seouldae 1A*’s intended instructional hours are 100. Self-study is possible and fairly convenient with the CD ROM, and each chapter also offers a self-check page for reviewing key concepts. However, despite the scale of the grammar appendix with English explanations, it can seem daunting and confusing for a beginner level student. It is likely that the grammar extension is more convenient for reviewing and checking rather than completely independent study. Textbooks generally do not offer much feedback, but *Seouldae*’s CD ROM does contain interactive games for vocabulary practice.

New grammar points are presented in a rule-example-exercise order in *Seouldae*. The rule, however, is not explained in the actual chapter, which

leaves room for students to try to figure out the rules by themselves first, and check the English explanations in the appendix for more in-depth learning. This way *Seouldae* is rather flexible and caters to different kinds of learners. The vocabulary section presents new words with pictures for practice and visual aid, and further vocabulary is listed throughout the chapter at the bottom of a page whenever needed, as well as at the end of each chapter. The book generally follows the example-exercise order, and gives one or two chances to practice after each new point or section.

Talking about the everyday life, basic greetings and expressions – these are important for all beginners no matter their age. *Seouldae* is directed towards adult learners and it shows mainly in the vocabulary choices. The themes of the chapters are “universal”, but the content is suitable for adult learners. Intermediate and advanced books could be analyzed more in terms of age appropriateness.

*Seouldae* is constructed consistently. It offers a more in-depth approach to Korean language by maximizing the use of linguistic knowledge. It also enables learners to use and practice their verbal language skills as it contains a lot of speaking exercises, albeit drill-like. Shy learners may have a hard time with all the verbal activities and pair work, and the detailed presentations of the rules can intimidate them. This can be counter-productive for the mistake-fearing Finnish learner.

To conclude, *Seouldae* offers an interactive way to practice several aspects of the Korean language through the CD ROM, and provides a sort of metadata; information on how the language and culture function, linguistic knowledge and wide cultural explanations. It contains a lot of opportunities to rehearse grammar and vocabulary, and emphasizes speaking activities, although the heavy use of pattern drills can be a disadvantage. *Seouldae* makes it easy to compare Korean language and culture to students' own, allows flexible use for different types of learners, makes self-study possible, and has appropriate content and consistent structure.

#### 4.5 Comparisons and further discussion

Above are the individual analyses of the four textbooks. Next, I will compare the results focusing on the key points of language proficiency. I will also discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the books, and make some suggestions for a Korean textbook in Finnish.

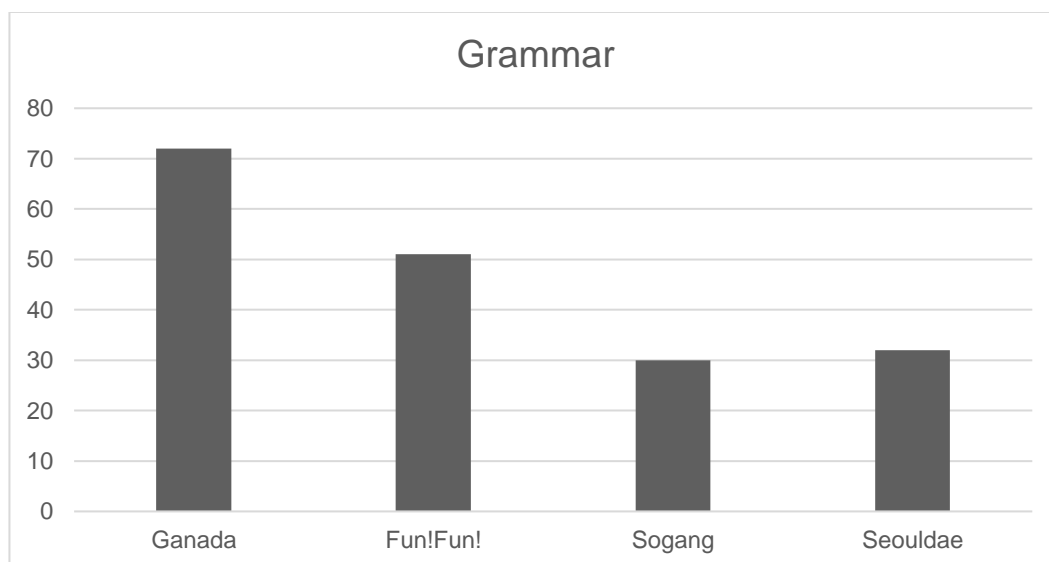


Figure 5. Grammar points

Figure 5 above compares the amount of grammar in each textbook. As can be seen, there is considerable variation between the four books. *Canada* contains the most grammar points, a total of 72, as listed in the grammar index. Second highest amount, 51 grammar points, is in *Fun Korean* according to its syllabus. *Sogang* lists its grammar points in its contents list, a total of 30. *Seouldae* contains 32 grammar points according to its grammar extension. It can be concluded, that the books do not reach the same proficiency level.

Since explicit teaching of grammar produces better results, the textbooks should provide separate grammar sections or otherwise make sure that grammar is properly explained and rehearsed. All the books have grammar sections in each chapter. *Canada* offers the most explicit explanations of grammar, while *Fun Korean* and *Seouldae* enable both explicit and more implicit teaching depending on whether the teacher uses the grammar appendix or chapter parts to explain the rules. *Sogang* is the weakest

textbook in terms of explicit teaching, as it offers no explanations to the grammar rules, but rather relies on example sentences only.

As the automatization of the knowledge of the structure of the target language requires a lot of input and practice, the textbooks should provide a lot of exercises, both grammar-specific drills and other opportunities for use. All the books deliver on this demand, although *Sogang* does not offer explanations. *Seouldae* on the other hand provides a lot of repetition, which helps the automatization process.

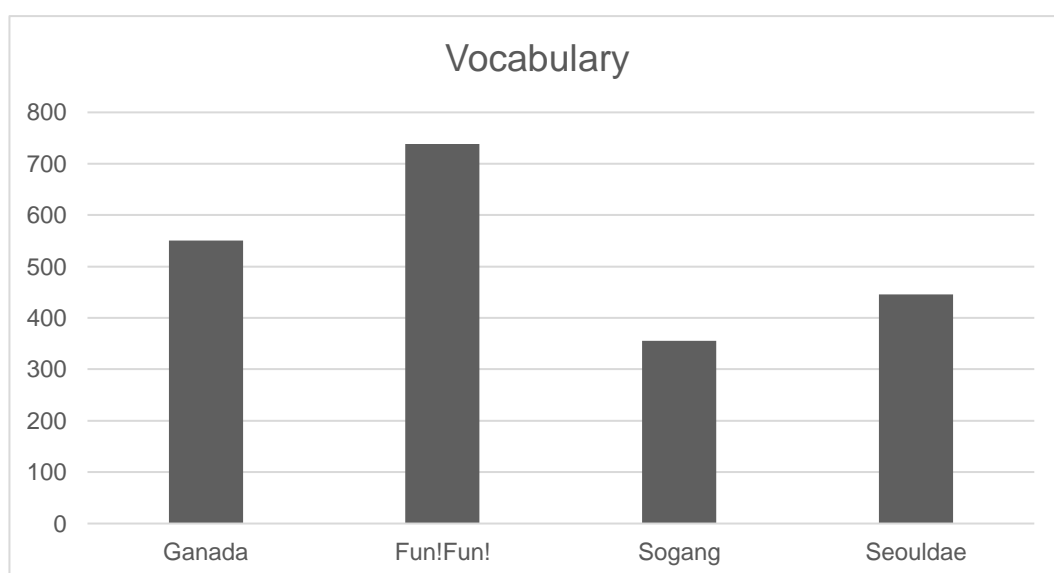


Figure 6. Vocabulary

Figure 6 above compares the amount of vocabulary between the four books. *Ganada* lists its vocabulary in the appendix. The word index contains 551 units. *Fun Korean* includes 738 words in its vocabulary glossary. *Sogang's* vocabulary consists of words and expressions, a total of 355, counted from individual chapters as there was no glossary of all the vocabulary introduced in the book. *Seouldae* contains 446 words counted from the glossary. As the CEFR level B1 requires about 2000 words (Niitemaa 2014: 142), learners finished with *Fun Korean* are almost halfway, when *Ganada* users are about three quarters from the target, and *Sogang* and *Seouldae* users even further back. TOPIK level 1 requires about 800 words. None of the books reach this level either, though *Fun Korean* comes closest. So, in terms of both grammar and vocabulary, the books' levels vary considerably.

As it is important to grow the vocabulary in the beginning as much as possible, beginner level textbooks should not only introduce a lot of words and expressions, but also provide opportunities to use them. All the books offer new vocabulary in themes, and a lot of exercises to practice. A lot of the exercises are drills, especially in *Ganada* and *Seoulidae*. The latter, however, provides a lot of repetition and a variety of exercises in the CD ROM as well as in the textbook itself. *Fun Korean* also has a lot of activities, but somewhat lacks the repetition. *Sogang's* weakness is the lack of translations and a vocabulary appendix. Figure 7 below shows how much exercises the books have, and how those exercises are distributed in each book.

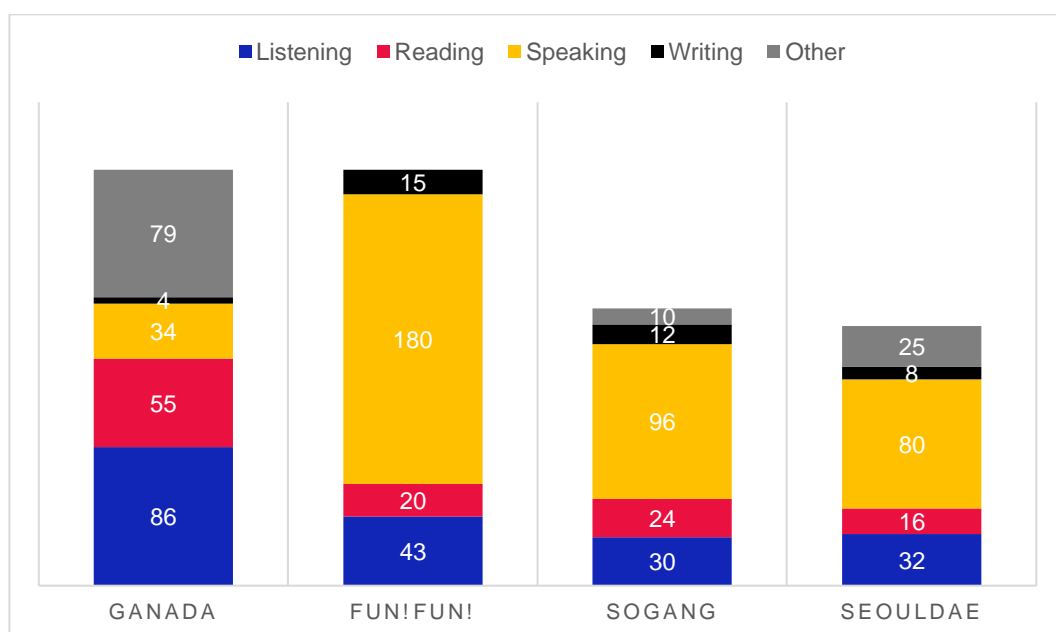


Figure 7. Exercise distribution

Of course, the results cannot be directly compared. The ending levels are different in each book, as was established by the amount of both grammar and vocabulary. The amount of content needs to be compared in relation to the intended instructional hours. *Ganada*, with the most grammar and second most vocabulary, is made for about 96 instructional hours. *Fun Korean*, with the most words and second most grammar, is made for about twice as much, 200 hours. *Sogang*, with least grammar and smallest amount of vocabulary, is made for 75–100 hours of work, and finally

*Seouldae* for 100 hours. If we look at the amount of content for each book, *Ganada* and *Fun Korean* seem to be at a similar level, *Sogang* and *Seouldae* on another. However, in terms of instructional hours, only *Fun Korean* stands out with double the used time compared to the others.

A few conclusions can be drawn. First, looking at the amount of grammar and vocabulary, the intended instructional hours, and the number of exercises (see Figure 7), *Fun Korean* is designed to reach the highest proficiency level. Although the classwork is intended to be double the other books', there is not twice the amount of content. This means that more time can be used per each new piece of information, for example doing more exercises. This produces better results.

Second, the other three textbooks use their intended instructional hours differently from each other also. *Ganada* has a lot of content included in its 96 hours of classroom work. The grammar is thoroughly explained, but attempting to learn all of it along with the wide vocabulary by mostly pattern drills does disservice to the students. Statistically, *Sogang* has the least content for its 75–100 hours, which should enable the teacher to spend more time on each part. However, we must remember, that regarding the number of exercises, almost half of the book (preparatory chapters) was excluded from the data, so it is difficult to compare to the other books. Teachers should use the extra time to compensate the lack of translations and explanations by extra material or other means. *Seouldae's* 100 hours are divided between more content than *Sogang*, but less than *Ganada*. Its flexibility is an asset, although it relies on drills as heavily as *Ganada*. If we take into account that some of *Sogang's* exercises were left out of the data, we can conclude, that *Seouldae* contains the least amount of exercises of all the four books.

The whole truth cannot be seen in the statistics. The differences between the books can also be due to the content of other relevant material of the same series, such as workbooks, grammar books or even electronic sources. They can include, for example, better explanations of grammar, or

more vocabulary and exercises. A lot of exercises in a book does not necessarily mean that the students take advantage of them. However, they can provide variety to choose the most appropriate activities from for each individual course. Much depends also on the structure and goals of the course that the books were originally made for. The goals could be passing a certain TOPIK level or gaining a proficiency high enough to be able to study or work in Korea et cetera. Logically, if the books are used in other institutions, a lot depends on how the teachers use the books, what kind of time constraints they have, the curriculum, access to extra material et cetera.

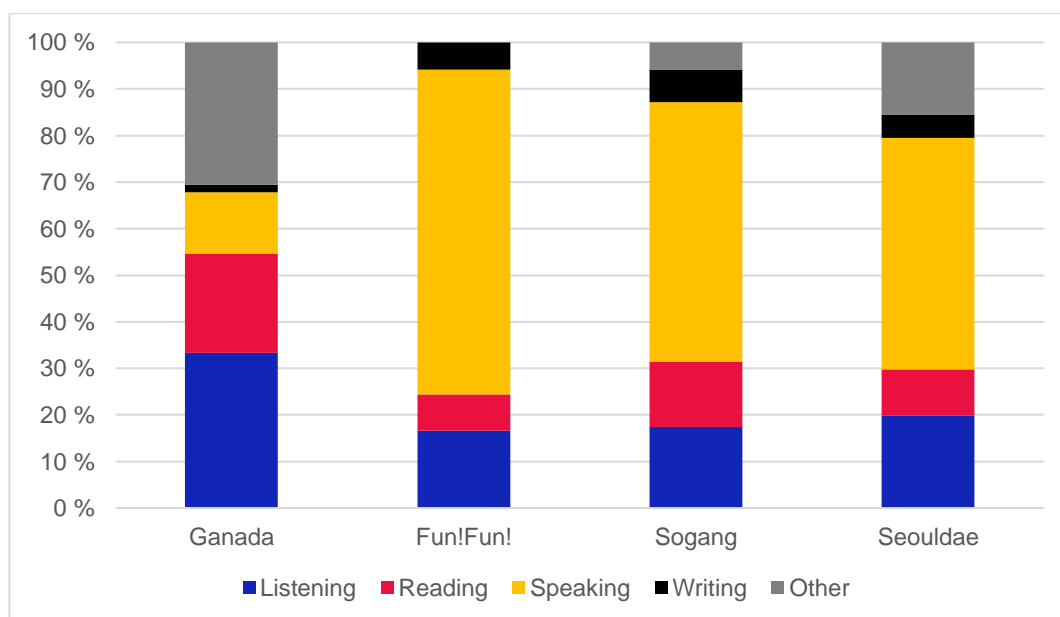


Figure 8. Exercise distribution %

Other than the amount of grammar, vocabulary and exercises, the statistics show the emphasis of the exercises in the textbooks, whether that be listening, reading, speaking, writing, or other. Figure 8 above shows the exercise distribution in percentages, or in other words, the relation of an exercise type to the overall amount of exercises in the textbooks. A general overview shows, that *Fun Korean*, *Sogang* and *Seouldae* have all put most emphasis on speaking activities, while *Ganada* has focused more on listening, followed close behind by 'other'. In closer inspection, the 'other' activities, largely consisting of pattern drills, can be spoken or written out.



Thus, *Ganada*'s emphasis on speaking skills depends on how individual teachers use the book, although even if all the pattern drills are spoken, the percentage of speaking exercises is still smaller than in the other textbooks. Also, *Sogang*'s speaking activity portion would be even greater, if the exercises in its preparatory chapters would have been included in the data.

Figure 8 also shows, that *Ganada* stands out from the rest. While *Fun Korean*, *Sogang* and *Seouldae* focus their attention on building the learners' productive language skills, *Ganada* focuses on receptive skills. However, if we consider the 'other' category as speaking activities, *Ganada* is quite evenly divided between productive and receptive skills. What is surprising, is that *Fun Korean* has such a small amount of reading exercises, as reading texts in the target language improves not only reading ability, but also pronunciation and fluency, and widens the mental lexicon. This is somewhat contradictory to its aim of communicative competence. *Seouldae* also has a small percentage of reading activities. Of course, reading is not the only way to reach the communicative goals; much depends on the variety of exercises, and amount of other input and feedback. Even though there is a strong correlation between the size of the learner's vocabulary and their text producing skills (Niitemaa 2014: 142), it does not show in the amount of vocabulary and writing exercises in the books. All the books give the least space for writing skill development, which is to be expected in the beginner level. Writing only becomes a part of TOPIK testing from level 3 onwards.

Finally, a note on the 'other' category that consists mostly of pattern drills. While they are beneficial to pronunciation practice (Lintunen 2014: 172), and useful for imprinting frequently used word compounds and sayings in the memory, it is more efficient to make learners produce the language on their own in different situations and throughout the instructional period, or book. All four textbooks were developed for building basic communicative competence. The statistics do not give an accurate representation of the quality of the exercises. Contrary to the graphs, all the books use pattern drills, some disguised as speaking activities. Creative communication practice was much smaller in number. This is justified to some extent on the

beginner level, because it minimizes the chances of the learners' speech becoming negative input. It must also be remembered, that an individual communicative exercise takes more time to carry out than a pattern drill, and so cannot be included in large amounts. However, the most efficient way of learning the rules and vocabulary, gaining courage and determination to use the target language, and maintaining motivation, is to have a lot of input, and opportunities to use the language *creatively* in an environment that offers feedback and encouragement.

## 5 Conclusions

With this study I wanted to look into the Korean textbooks that are used in teaching Korean in Finland, outline their characteristics, and compare them in relation to the current idea of foreign language learning, to the Finnish learning environment, and to each other. The goal was not to rank any one book above another, but to simply see what the strong and weak points of each book are, and how well they suit Finnish learners. The ultimate motive behind this research is to chart beneficial characteristics and what to avoid in the making of a Korean textbook in Finnish. I am hopeful that such a book will be created in the future.

I ended up choosing four textbooks for my research: *Ganada Korean 1*, *Fun! Fun! Korean 1*, *Sogang Korean New Series 1A* and *Seouldae Korean 1A*, each used in a beginner level Korean course in Helsinki and Turku. The quantitative data included the amount of grammar, vocabulary and exercises in each book. The exercises were further divided between listening, reading, speaking, writing, and other tasks. The qualitative analyses of the contents included evaluation of the quantitative points, how the books support the development of pragmalinguistic skills, and how they take into consideration learners' personal differences, such as language background and age.

The results for language skills practice varied considerably. To take in as much new information as possible, students should be able to come across a lot of vocabulary and grammar presented in themes, and practice with a variety of exercises. *Ganada* and *Fun Korean* made the best use of the steep learning curve of the beginning with the most content, although it must be remembered that some of the exercises in *Sogang* and *Seouldae* were 'hidden' in preparatory chapters or CD ROM and thus, do not show in the statistics. All the textbooks presented new information in themes, and had a mixture of creative exercises and pattern drills to activate different parts of the brain for optimal learning. Creative or communicative activities were a minority – *Ganada* particularly had a heavy emphasis on drills. Of course, drills in the beginning work as positive input without the risk of mistakes

becoming negative input for the learners. However, if conversation practice is neglected, the knowledge of the language remains shallow. Particularly in Finland, where contact with Korean is so small, learners should get as many opportunities to use the target language as possible.

Opportunities to hear Korean are few as well, so the textbook becomes the main source of audial input the students can encounter. *Ganada* was the only book to emphasize listening exercises above all others. However, all the books had more tracks than actual listening exercises on their CDs, so opportunities to hear spoken native Korean were not limited to the amount of the tasks. Secondary input comes from hearing the teacher and other students using Korean in class.

Adult learners benefit from reading as well as listening. Again, out of the four textbooks, *Ganada* had the most reading exercises. Generally, the reading activities in the books were appropriate for the beginner level, but *Sogang* fell short on translations, which can confuse and frustrate learners. Learning vocabulary and reading go hand in hand. This was considered most in *Ganada* and *Sogang*, the former having a lot of vocabulary and reading activities, and the latter having much less words and expressions, but a good amount of supporting reading exercises in relation to them. *Fun Korean* had the largest disparity by having the most vocabulary and the least emphasis on reading.

As (Finnish) beginners often fear making mistakes in their speech, it is important for the textbook to offer variation and repetition in terms of activities. Correct pronunciation requires explicit teaching, a lot of speaking practice, and feedback. *Fun Korean* emphasized speaking activities the most, with *Sogang* and *Seouldae* close behind. The exercises in all four books were a mixture of mechanical drills and creative speech acts, which helps with memorizing. All the books also included pronunciation practice either in the introduction of the *hangul* or in separate sections throughout the book.

The basic elements of writing skills begin from knowing how to write letters, syllables, sentences, and finally short texts. All four textbooks met these requirements, although *Fun Korean* had very few *hangul*-writing exercises. Comparing the books with each other, *Ganada* had the least writing tasks, while *Fun Korean* and *Sogang* had the most in number as well as in relation to the other exercise types. Although a large vocabulary usually means good text production skills, the correlation is not prominent on this level. *Ganada* had a lot of vocabulary but few, short writing tasks, *Fun Korean* had a lot of both, and *Sogang* and *Seouldae* had little vocabulary but a fair amount of writing exercises.

The other exercises consisted of pattern drills and communicative tasks. While pattern drills are beneficial to pronunciation practice and even help memorizing, in order to acquire conversational skills learners must be able to use the target language creatively. A language is the sum of its speakers, a social act. While all the books did include social activities and pair/group work, unfortunately they were few in number. On this level, it is still justified, as beginners should focus more on growing their mental lexicon and knowledge of the target language. On later levels, the amount of interactive, communicational activities should increase, so the students' mental network of language not only grows wider, but also thicker, and they become more fluent.

As culture and language are inseparable, I looked at the cultural content of each book. They all contained native Korean in both texts and audio tracks. The language was not natural, but scripted. Without everyday natural encounters, this gives the learners an accurate, if slightly stiff depiction of the language and how it is spoken in a native environment. Cultural information was portrayed implicitly through language like this, but also through pictures in all four textbooks. *Sogang* was the only book without separate information boxes, while *Seouldae* offered cultural notes in exceptional depth with a possibility for comparisons between Korean and the learners' own cultures. Culture in textbooks is too wide a subject to be

included in this study in detail. It deserves a more in-depth research of its own.

Considering that the textbook is the primary source of input of Korean for Finnish learners, and that they have previously learned at least two foreign languages, the books meet the expectations quite well. As they are made by Korean language institutions, the input is accurate, and more up to the cultural trends. All the books except *Sogang* provided English translations and explanations for their content. English is a widely known language, and Finns generally know it well. However, using another language as a mediator can cause problems. Comparing meaning and characteristics of the target language (Korean) with mother tongue (Finnish/Swedish) or mediator language (English) requires high proficiency of the mediator language. If the learners' proficiency of the mediator is not up to par, it is left to the teacher to provide the comparison of Korean and Finnish. Also, translating Korean to English to Finnish unavoidably produces errors and misunderstandings.

Some requirements for adult learners were met and others were not. First, the instructional hours differed between *Fun Korean* and the other books. *Fun Korean* had the most intended instructional hours overall. *Ganada* had the most content for its intended instructional time. Compared to younger students, adults need a long exposure to the target language, and in this regard *Fun Korean* was the best choice, although it should be kept in mind that the end of one book or course is not always the end of exposure to the target language; some continue studying. Second, the books themselves do not offer much self-study opportunities or feedback. Textbooks created specifically for classroom use are generally not suitable for self-study. Communicative competence can only be attained by communicating. Vocabulary, grammar, cultural information, reading and listening can all be practiced without an instructor, but for productive language skills a teacher is essential for feedback, so that mistakes do not become negative input. In this light, *Ganada* seems to be the best choice for students learning Korean on their own, as it has less exercises that require other students or a

teacher. Third, most of the books are flexible for different learning styles: rules can be applied to exercises or deducted from example sentences. The exception is *Sogang*, which does not have explicit explanations of the rules at all, only example sentences. Finally, all the books had interesting, age-appropriate content, although some of it can be difficult to make use of, for example if it has to do with specific places in Korea, that the students learning Korean in Finland cannot know of or go to.

In terms of keeping the students' motivation high, the books all do well – with a teacher. A variety of exercises and a steady incline of the difficulty level can be seen in the books. They are logically structured and thus easy to use. However, they can all, including *Ganada*, become confusing and frustrating for beginners, who may not yet have knowledge of or access to reliable reference sources like dictionaries, grammar books or websites.

Based on these results, I would conclude that the four textbooks suit different needs and situations. *Ganada* is better suited for use in Korea, as it focuses more on receptive than productive language skills, or it needs a teacher that has access to extra speaking exercises. In a situation without extra material and contact with Korean, like Finland, it is better suited for self-study purposes with its wide vocabulary and grammar explanations. *Fun Korean* is a good choice for use in Finland as it emphasizes speaking and has a lot of content, making it a flexible book for different language course lengths. *Sogang* would work as well, but it requires either a native Korean teacher, or someone with thorough knowledge of the language, that has access to extra material for translations and explanations of grammar. *Seouldae* is suited for learners that want to understand how Korean works more deeply – linguistic knowledge, if you will.

However, they all have two major flaws. First, the price: shipping relatively small amounts of textbooks from Korea is expensive, and it shows. Buying an expensive textbook for one language course can lower motivation, or even stop students from applying for the course in the first place. The problem is even worse, if the course requires them to buy the workbook as

well, or as in *Sogang*'s case, two supplementary books in addition to the workbook. Second, all of them have the problem of a mediator language. An ideal solution would be to make a Korean textbook (series) in Finnish, that considers the specifics of Finnish learners and learning environment.

A beginner level Korean textbook in Finnish should include thorough explanations of grammar in Finnish, a lot of vocabulary with Finnish translations, pronunciation practice, and several exercises in different varieties. Special attention should be given to making learning fun, interesting and interactive. The books in this study are not bad choices – their biggest flaw is that they use a mediator language. The emphasis of the exercises should be in communicational activities and listening. Fun and interesting content can help keep the mood of the class relaxed and thus lower the threshold of producing speech for the mistake-fearing Finns.

This study should be seen as an overview of four beginner level Korean textbooks, and a beginning of research on Korean textbooks in Finland. It is my hope that more is discovered in terms of ideal content, emphasis and distribution of exercises, as well as the levels of proficiency different textbooks produce. Further research on higher level textbooks is needed for a more accurate evaluation of the different book series on all sections of language proficiency. Possible questions could be, for example, whether the amount of writing exercises increases, how the exercise distribution changes, how much vocabulary and grammar is presented, do communicational exercises increase et cetera. Other interesting topics could include the significance of pictures in Korean textbooks, the correlation between using electronic materials and the achieved proficiency level, and students' opinions on specifically created interactive classroom activities.

Learning a language is learning another way to think about things. Foreign languages allow us access to the worldview of people in other cultures. It broadens our perspective, deepens our capability for empathy, and just simply gives us more chances of finding enjoyable entertainment. Finnish



students learning Korean as a foreign language all have their own reasons for studying it. Whether it is wanting to understand the lyrics of their favourite K-pop artists' songs, going to Korea as an exchange student, or working with Korean people in a Korean company, interest in Korean language and culture is rising and research needs to keep up with the times.

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